

"SONDRY FORNES":
THE METAPHORS OF LOVE IN THE FAERIE QUEENE

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ABSTRACT

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The main thesis of this paper is that a Neo-Platonic concept of Eros as 'Reciprocity' binds the thought and action of the three Books of Love in The Faerie Queene.

In the first chapter, Ficino's "Doctrine of Eros" is related to both the structure of the Britomart metaphor and to the pivotal actions of Books III and IV, rescue and capture. Chapter two examines the philosophical background and the symbolic tradition with which Spenser effects the transition from the mythic structure of the Books of Chastity and Friendship, to the historical structure of the Book of Justice.

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INTRODUCTION

I have had, with other readers, a sense of bewildering vastness as the stories of The Faerie Queene unfold into the past and future with startling simultaneity. It is a poem replete with such paradox, 'top full' of echoes and fragments and thick with hints of continuity. It is a fantasy rooted in the mythic beginnings of European civilization yet moving in the present; and its structure is as spiral-like as the ancient patterns of the 'old religion'.

Like the interlaced designs which illuminated medieval manuscripts, Spenser's poem utilizes both geometric and organic structural principles. In this thesis these two processes are demonstrated through the cyclic structure of the myths and the linear progression of the narrative. The superimposition of these two structural designs and the wide canvas of interwoven themes bestow a legacy of creative example and demand a variety of critical techniques. Thus the lines of inquiry this study pursues are divided. The first follows the linear actions of the Love Quest and reveals that Spenser's unified vision of Love and Justice is the central panel in the 'triptych' of Books III, IV and V. The second line of inquiry traces the influence of Ficino's amatory theory on the concentric circles of Spenser's metaphoric structure and thought.

This paper describes Eros, in the books of Chastity, Friendship and Justice, as both a structural principle and a philosophic truth which Spenser expresses through symbolic variations of the archetypal struggle of Venus and Mars. For the first function of Eros I have sought evidence

in the action of the poem and have tried to demonstrate how Spenser seems to have structured his allegory along the principles of reciprocity implicit in Ficino's Doctrine of Eros. For a second view of Eros I have traced the archetypal symbolism through its progressions in the character of Britomart who reconciles the Venus-Mars, Love-War conflict within her. Aspects of Britomart like the figures of the Venus Hermaphrodite, Isis and finally Horus are then treated to illustrate the philosophic and religious resolutions which Spenser reaches using Eros as his guide. Perhaps it would be helpful here to note that in the course of reading the three Books of Love we meet two basic types of hermaphrodites; those formed by sexual union (like the mingling Donne describes in The Canonization as "We two being one are it"), which include Mars and Venus, Isis and Osiris, and those embodying hermaphroditism in themselves; the latter exemplified in the unfolding of Venus, Isis and Natura.

I have tried to define the boundaries of my argument in the first part of this thesis. There the discussion of the metaphors of love in The Faerie Queene and a description of the background of Ficino's "Doctrine of Eros," lead to a comparison of the ideas of Concord and Eros and finally show how Eros becomes the structural guide to the Britomart metaphor. The struggle of Venus to overcome Mars and the aspects which link the attributes of Mars and Cupid are treated through an analysis of the two specific narrative actions. The capture and rescue of Amoret are seen as symbolic actions which reveal the dual nature of Eros first as Ficino's 'Simple' and then as his 'Reciprocal' Love. In the figure of the Venus Hermaphrodite these divisions of Eros are fully reconciled and the focus of the discussion turns to the visionary aspects of the goddess. A comparison of the two altars of Love, first that of Cupid and then that

of Venus, provides the foundation for an exploration of the prophetic images in the three Books of Love.

The philosophical background supporting Spenser's vision of history carries the discussion from the arena of myth into that of history. Spenser's unification of Love and Justice is shown to be based upon Ficino's Christianized interpretation of Plato's creation myth as it appears in The Symposium. Like Ficino, Spenser assigns the qualities of a hermaphrodite to the virtue of Justice; and it is upon the bisexual attributes of Justice that I structure the analysis of the roles of Britomart, Artegall and Radigund in Book V. This interpretation of the Book of Justice shows Spenser's continued use of the androgyne as a symbol of Eros, the principle of reciprocal flow first elucidated in the work of Ficino.

The Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris becomes relevant to this argument as the concept of Providential Justice overtakes ideas of fate which are naturally associated with the cyclic aspects of the Greek myths (the structural axis of Books III and IV). Through Isis, Osiris and Horus the transcendent qualities of Justice are demonstrated and finally in the figure of Horus we are placed before a symbol of resolution which directs our thoughts to both time and eternity.

Although critical observations on such figures as the Venus Hermaphrodite and Isis are plentiful, I have used these symbolic presentations as the core of this thesis on the grounds that they provide a firm buttress to the central argument that it is Spenser's vision of Eros as reciprocal flow which guides the narrative of the Books of Love. The philosophic scope encompassed by these figures has allowed the use of such terms as 'Simple' and 'Reciprocal' Love, thereby avoiding the confusion often caused by relying on more traditional terms such as 'Courtly Love'.

or the 'Petrarchan Convention'. Neither of these expressions seems to provide as clear a guide to Spenser's use of Cupid and Mars as Ficino's 'Simple Love': the latter holds religious and philosophic meaning in solution, permitting us to see aspects of Courtly Love and Petrarchan influences without becoming enmeshed in longstanding critical arguments and differentiations.

As my point of departure, I have chosen to describe briefly the influence of Ficino's "Doctrine of Eros" upon the aesthetic principles of the Renaissance artist. My debt to Ficino is obvious throughout this paper but perhaps less easily seen is the indirect influence of the vast works of scholarship by such critics as D.C. Allen, Northrop Frye, Paul Aijpers and W.B.C. Watkins, whose works when read and reread tend to become part of the fabric of one's entire exposition. I trust that as the argument of this thesis progresses, carried by Spenser's images of Love and Justice, the critical influences, both direct and indirect will be complemented by my own contributions. To echo both Spenser and Ficino, "boldness" must be the "foot follower of love, not love of boldness". However as I trace Spenser's vision of Love I hope that my understanding of the poet's dictum "Bee bold" is tempered by his advice "Be not too bold" and that the equitable relationship Spenser values so highly in Love and Justice has been achieved in the balance of scholarship and critical interpretation.

CHAPTER I

The Metaphors of Love in The Faerie Queene

I. The Doctrine of Eros

Ficino's "Doctrine of Eros," in itself a part of a comprehensive intellectual tendency which manifested itself in Renaissance philosophy and art, is integral to the three books encompassing the story of Britomart's quest for Love and Justice. Spenser's narrative in the Books of Love is sustained by mythic symbol and historical figures but draws upon Ficino's vision of Eros for both the meaning and the structure of the Britomart metaphor.

Among the most significant books in the Renaissance was Plato's Symposium, published with Ficino's Latin translation and commentary.¹ Although some critics feel that Ficino's Commentary as a source of Spenserian thought was superseded by the popular Il Cortegiano,² Robert Ellrodt in his monumental work on Neo-Platonism in Spenser, demonstrates Ficino's direct and pervasive influence.³

¹William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser, A Study (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 111.

²Earle B. Fowler, Spenser and the System of Courtly Love (New York: Phaeton Press, 1968), p. 4.

³Robert Ellrodt, Neo-Platonism in the Poetry of Spenser (Folcroft, P.A.: Folcroft Press Inc., 1969), pp. 112-113 105-212.

For Spenser, the Commentary was more than a philosophic handbook; because of the 'Energia' activating Ficino's entire presentation of his Doctrine of Eros, the Commentary was also a wellspring of poetics in the 16th Century.⁴

Through Ficino's interpretation of The Symposium, a new theodicy of art arose. An Eros-centered philosophy, based on the unity of love between God and man, quickly grew to transcend the dualism of Medieval thought.⁵ The legacy of Heraclitus:

that the universe and things in it are maintained in existence by the simultaneous operation of contrary tensions⁶

was laid aside by Ficino's innovative understanding and symbolic rendering of Plato's Eros as the unifying principle which is the dynamic of the cosmos. In 1469, presenting his new understanding of Eros to the Florentine Neo-Platonists, Ficino wrote:

Wherefore...all the parts of the world, because they are the parts of one creation, in each of its parts and essence, are bound to each other by a certain mutual affection so that it may be justly said that love is a perpetual knot and binder of the world, the immovable support of its parts and firm foundation of the whole creation.⁷

This central thought in Ficino's Doctrine of Eros mediated the harsh polarities expressed by the ancient Heraclitean vision of flux.

⁴Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, trans. Mario Domandi. (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 111.

⁵Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, p. 111.

⁶Plato, The Symposium, trans. W. Hamilton. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), section 187.

⁷Marsilio Ficino, Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium, trans. Sears Reynolds Jayne. (University of Missouri, Columbia, 1944), p. 182.

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It superseded the idea of "balanced tension", stressing instead the flow of reciprocity.

Stasis in the coincidence of opposites as suggested by Heraclitus, was now mediated by the idea that Love was moved by the "desire of restoring the whole" of creation.⁸ In the English, French and Italian literature influenced by Ficino's work, the medieval discordia-concors topos was changed and adapted to the service of a new philosophy. The polarities expressed by this topos came to be seen as "not an absolute but a relative opposition".⁹ Ernst Cassirer, with other critics,¹⁰ emphasizes the subtle change in both poetry and painting wrought by this new philosophical stance: the artist, as eagerly as the philosopher, embraced the idea of reciprocal flow. In Ficino's idea of Eros, the artist saw a reflection of his own double nature and of his own striving to unite the world of appearance and ultimate reality.¹¹ Cassirer writes that for the Renaissance artist:

The difference between the two poles is only possible and conceivable in that it implies a reciprocal relationship between them.¹²

Through the concept of Reciprocity, the artist, a dealer in appearances was in touch with reality, the Divine; for although the desire to return to the "first cause" remains basic to Neo-Platonic theory, now (and this was typical of the Renaissance view of the universe), God strives

⁸ Marsilio Ficino, Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 155.

⁹ Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, p. 80.

¹⁰ Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 129-230.

¹¹ Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, p. 135.

¹² Ibid. p. 132.

toward man.¹³ First in the works of the Italian Neo-Platonists and then in the English tradition of Neo-Platonic thought, we find that the unity of the universe was expressed by artists as a unity which was maintained by the reciprocal flow between contrary tensions.

II. Eros and Concord

In the Commentary Plato's description of the birth of Eros is translated as follows:

On the birthday of Venus, while the Gods were feasting, Poros the son of thought, drunk with a draught of nectar, lay with Penia in the garden of Jove, and from this union was born Love.¹⁴

Conceived in the union of Fullness and Want, Eros is really neither, but is instead a mixture of contradictions whose function is to unify image and idea, human and divine -- to actively join the world of appearance to the world of Love.

In the Hymn in Honor of Love, Spenser, acknowledging his debt to Plato through Ficino, describes the birth of Love:

Or who can perfectly declare
The wondrous cradle of thy infancy,
When thy great mother, first thee bare, Venus,
Begot of Plenty and of Penury,
Though elder than thine own nativity¹⁵ (l.l. 50-55).

The paradox of divine love Spenser speaks of here affects the portrait of human love so carefully designed in The Faerie Queene.¹⁶

¹³Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, p. 132

¹⁴Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 152.

¹⁵Edmund Spenser, Books I and II of The Faerie Queene, eds. Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele (New York: The Odyssey Press Inc., 1965), from The Hymn in Honor of Love.

¹⁶Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1966).

Whether we look at Britomart, the knight of Love, through the positive figures of Venus and Isis or through the negative figure of Mars, the ambiguous nature of Love described in the Hymn in Honor of Love as Porus and Penia, is held before us. This ambiguity governs the actions of the love quest. The reader, like the questing knight, must not seek static resolutions where only fluctuating responses, mirroring this paradoxical centre of Spenser's vision of Eros, will be found.¹⁷

Only in the figure of Concord however does Spenser create an emblem of stasis, a traditional embodiment of Heraclitus' ancient doctrine. The image of Concord is an example of stasis in conflict. Concord "holds" the "invisible bonds" of the world: her function is like that of a slender chain linking oppositions. When we meet this emblematic figure on the porch of the Temple of Venus we find in fact that there is no reciprocal flow between Love and Hate, only Concord as the static interceptor. Spenser's placement and characterization of this figure does not seem to suggest the true reconciliation that Ficino's doctrine of reciprocity implies, although as learned and sensitive a reader as C. S. Lewis points to Concord as an image of Neo-Platonic "natura unialis", specifying that this is a minor image of reconciliation.¹⁸ Alastair Fowler however supports my understanding of this image, pointing out the absence of movement so necessary to complete the true 16th Century meaning of Concord. In his discussion Professor Fowler relates the caduceus, Cambina's "rod of peace" (F.Q. IY-iii-42), to the image of Concord. Fowler names the caduceus

¹⁷ Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 110.

¹⁸ C. S. Lewis, Spenser's Images of Life, ed. Alastair Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 43.

upon which two serpents are "entrayled mutually in lovely lore" (st. 42) as the source of movement without which Concord, as symbol, is incomplete. He concludes that Concord may be an agent of the movement towards unity but not the symbol of unity itself.¹⁹ The peace achieved by Cambina, one "devoid of hateful strife", is in fact not paralleled in the image of Concord. While the Cambina episode emphasizes a real and "sudden change of things" (st. 49), the picture of Concord Spenser draws, illustrates the medieval view of an 'eternal' cosmic situation. In the image of the two 'mutually entrayled' serpents on Cambina's rod, Eros is present as the movement of reciprocal flow. Concord however, simply maintains the contrary tensions, Love and Hate. Her primary function, we are told, is to contain the course of heaven (st. 33), to maintain the Classical vision of the cosmos - "the world in state unmoved..." (IV-x-35).

My understanding is that in The Faerie Queene, Spenser first presents the traditional idea of Concord as stasis and this image must be disengaged from the Spenserian idea of discordia-concors as flux. This latter principle he identifies with reciprocal flow, the dynamic of the new vision of Eros.²⁰

Kathleen Williams represents another popular approach to the problem of placing Spenser's image of static Concord.²¹ Professor Williams discusses the idea of 'Harmonia' (or Concord) as the basis of

¹⁹ Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, (London: Routledge and Paul, 1964), p. 166.

²⁰ Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment. pp. 45-46.

²¹ Kathleen Williams, "Venus and Diana: Some Uses of Myth in The Faerie Queene", in Spenser, a Collection of Critical Essays. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: 1968), p. 97.

the Britomart metaphor, accurately perceiving Britomart as a symbol for relating the ideological background of Faerieland to myth. The Classical mythic structure, Miss Williams suggests, is the birth of "Harmonia" from the union of Venus and Mars. This structure is compatible with Renaissance iconography; only the narrative action of the three books of the Britomart quest argues against it. Spenser in Books III and IV describes Britomart's movement towards Love as a struggle exemplified in the tension contained in the symbolic actions of capture and rescue. The union of Venus and Mars however does metaphorically describe the psychological unity which prevails in Book V as Britomart prepares to accept her judicial role as sovereign. It is not the Union of Mars and Venus but the androgynous Venus, a symbol of Harmony and reciprocity, who achieves for Spenser the attributes Miss Williams personifies as 'Harmonia'. Spenser does not include an active Harmonia figure in The Faerie Queene, but instead leaves behind the mythic Venus symbol and adopts Isis who as "Equity" is the axis of an iconography better suited to express the reciprocal flow of Eros in the world. The polarities contained by this hermaphrodite so precisely exemplify the new doctrine of reciprocal flow through Eros, while Concord - Harmonia remains a symbol of the Classical synthesis irrevocably bound to the Heraclitean idea of stasis emerging from flux. Spenser, because he chooses to descend into providential history, requires a symbol which can be divorced from Classical myth to serve the narrative demands of Book V. As we will see later in this thesis, the hermaphroditic Venus is a perfect vehicle for the transition from myth to history. The attributes of this symbol are not lost when Spenser shifts his focus to Isis and moving away from the fixed cyclic patterns of Classical myth, introduces us to the linear dimension of history.

As I noted earlier, in Book IV of The Faerie Queene, Concord is seated on the porch of the Temple of Venus (IV-x-31), withdrawn from the tumult of the narrative. Hers is not an active function; she is properly isolated from the action and rendered as a static emblem. She thus emblematically represents (rather than symbolically presents) the force that contains "...all the world in state unmoved..." (IV-x-35). The poet, depicting Concord as a static emblem rather than as a character engaged in the immediacy of the narrative, seems to indicate that his heroine will go beyond the image Concord represents to confront the reality symbolically presented in the Temple of Venus. Spenser sketches many Eros figures, each of which surpasses the emblem of Concord in depth and symbolic meaning. Although Spenser's image of Concord has provided critics like Williams, Fowler and C. S. Lewis with a fruitful source for the birth of the Britomart metaphor, in the following pages I hope to show that Spenser uses Eros and not Concord to demonstrate reciprocal flow in Britomart. Eros as androgyne, a pervasive symbol of the Divine creation, is first (in Venus) Spenser's pattern for generative love, and ultimately (in Isis) the symbol uniting Love and Justice.²²

Having considered the philosophy supporting the Eros hypothesis, and having offered my response to the general critical stance on Concord, I will now explore the actual components of the Britomart metaphor.

²²Alastair Fowler, "Emanations of Glory: Neo-Platonic Order in Spenser's Faerie Queene," from A Theatre for Spenserians, eds. Judith M. Kennedy and James A. Reither (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1973), p. 54.

III. The Britomart Metaphor

i. Introduction

As this discussion of The Faerie Queene evolves we will see that the structure of the Britomart metaphor introduces us to the structure of the poem and that character provides a guide to the meaning of action. In short, we may approach the complexities of Spenser's world of Faerie by first understanding the attributes of Britomart, his central Knight of Love.

It has been recognized that Books III and IV of The Faerie Queene are made up of separate narratives, each playing a part in delineating Spenser's concept of Eros. These multiple narratives describe a variety of symbolic actions which allow the conflicts inherent in the nature of Eros to unfold.²³ I should like to stress that the structure of these actions is also represented in the figure of Britomart in whom the dual nature of Eros is characterized by symbols of conflict, the mythological figures, Venus and Mars. In Book III particularly, this archetypal polarity describing concord and discord in love and war, constitutes the Britomart metaphor.²⁴

Both the Venus-Mars polarity which first characterizes Britomart and the Venus hermaphrodite, symbolizing the resolution of this conflict in Book IV, are abandoned as structural metaphors in the Book of Justice, the last book of the Love quest. Here the historical dimension of Spenser's allegory is primary and the poet replaces the myth of Venus with the sacred history of Isis (and Osiris) to introduce the idea of Providence

²³ Alan M. F. Gunn, The Mirror of Love, A Reinterpretation of The Romance of the Rose (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech. Press, 1952), p. 71.

²⁴ Henry Gibbons Lotspeich, Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York: Gordon Press Inc., 1965), p. 80.

as the new daimon, who through Eros, unites human and divine in history.²⁵
 In the betrothal of Britomart and Artegall, Spenser places Eros in the context of creative historical action. In doing so he leads Eros out of myth and romance and into time and history; he transforms Eros into the Immanent Love which reveals the just attributes of the Divine.

ii. The Archetypal Components

Because Britomart is the axis of the mythology in Books III and IV²⁶ the conflicts of all love relationships are relevant to the actions of her quest. Thus when we follow the amorous trials of Amor^{et}, we soon know that she is a little Venus - a micro version of Britomart's erotic nature. Similarly, when we follow Belpheobe's adventures, we soon understand that she too is an aspect of Love, embodying the virago figure of chaste Diana, the feminine counterpart of Mars. Spenser reflects the varieties of Britomart's erotic experience through these mirrors of love allowing Britomart "In mirrors more than one her selfe to see" (Proem III, st. 5).

Professor Tuve's remarks in Allegorical Imagery are relevant to the complex structure of character and action in Britomart's quest. She writes:

Events connected by entrelacement are not juxtaposed; they are interlaced, and when we get back to our first character he is not where we left him as we finished his episode.

This important observation on the principles governing the action of Romance are particularly applicable to Spenser's character structure.

²⁵ Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment, p. 71.

²⁶ Kathleen Williams, "Venus and Diana: Some Uses of Myth in The Faerie Queene," in Spenser, A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 99-100.

It is my belief that in The Faerie Queene Spenser's choice of the representative character suggests that through enterlacement of character the poet defines narrative events. When we return to Britomart, the "first character" and axis of the entire narrative, we find "not precisely what we left, but something we understand differently because of what we have seen since."²⁷ From the variety of the surrogates Spenser chooses and the diverse nature of the many episodes we learn that whether or not Britomart is directly involved in the action is not really pertinent to the maturation of her character. Like the reader, whom Spenser will fashion into "a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline"²⁸ Britomart will learn by proxy. These observations lead me to conclude that Spenser illuminates the meaning of both the character and the action of Britomart's quest through the surrogate figures as significantly as he does when Britomart herself first recognizes her destiny in the "Venus-looking glass" (III-1-8).

A good example of the way interlacement (or specifically, learning through surrogates) works, may be seen in Spenser's treatment of Jealousy (III-ix-10), a vice exposed in Book III with Paridell and Hellenore standing in for Venus and Mars and thus for the tension contained in the Britomart metaphor. The significance of that episode does not directly affect our understanding of Britomart until Book V canto 6. At that point in her quest Britomart is somehow able to overcome her "jealous thought" the "...thousand feares that love-sicke fancies faine to fynde" (V-vi-3).

²⁷ Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 363.

²⁸ Edmund Spenser, A Letter of the Author's, from Books I and II of The Faerie Queene, eds. Robert Kelllogg and Oliver Steele (New York: The Odyssey Press Inc., 1965), p. 74.

Because the exemplary tales set forth in the preceding two books have enlightened her, we soon realize that Britomart will not fall victim to jealousy. But how did chaste Britomart absorb the lesson taught by the ridiculous example of Malbecco without being tainted by it? Like the reader who learns through his vicarious experience, Britomart learns by proxy.

iii. Reciprocity and the delineation of characters

I have drawn attention to some of the archetypal components of the Britomart metaphor and have indicated through the example of 'Jealousy' how interlacement of character and action also relate to this metaphor. In the following pages I define Britomart's character both through her own experience and that of others, specifically through the aspects of Eros exemplified by Busirane, Scudamore and Amoret. The rescue of Amoret, the subject of my ensuing discussion, is an action having symbolic meaning; for within the Britomart metaphor, Venus is victorious over Mars. Significantly, the principles of reciprocity in Eros are set forth through this symbolic victory within the heroine; and as we recognize the mythic value of each narrative action we gain an appreciation of the symbolic dimension of narrative events. This aspect of Spenser's method allows us to see the interdependence of the narrative action and the allegorical or symbolic meaning. Thus reciprocity, the central principle of Ficino's "Doctrine of Eros" becomes an integral part of both the structure and meaning of the poem.

The delineation of Britomart's character also demonstrates the obverse side of Ficino's idea of reciprocity. 'Simple Love' representing the warlike aspect of Love and thus recalling the Courtly Love tradition, is made evident in the narrative through the actions of capture and rescue.

I have said that the conflicts of all love relationships are relevant to the actions of Britomart's quest; Scudamore and Busirane exemplify the obstructive attitudes which lie in the way of Britomart's achievement of 'Reciprocal Love.'

IV. Capture and Rescue: The Struggle of 'Simple Love'

i. Introduction

Perhaps it is because Ficino speaks of love with such visual analogies, that he influenced both poetic and plastic art in the Renaissance; it seems natural then that Spenser, acclaimed as a 'visual' poet, would repeatedly turn to Ficino for the impetus of his own inspiration. In the following analysis we will see Spenser taking key quotations and using key conceptual ideas which are the core of Ficino's discourse on Love.

In reciprocal love, Ficino describes the lovers as each giving "himself to the other in such a way that each receives the other in return";²⁹ but Ficino's description of simple love moves away from an account of an equitable exchange of identities. It is negative and involves the martial-like possessing of another:

...the power of Cupid differs from the force of Mars: indeed it is in this way that military power and love differ: the general possesses others through himself; the lover takes possession of himself through another.³⁰

Ficino directly locates love in Cupid and aggression in Mars; Spenser, as we will see below, aligns Cupid and Mars and locates love in Venus. Thus for Spenser, Cupid and Mars, in that they share aggressive proclivities, are aligned as adherents of simple love. Here literary tradition,

²⁹ Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 144.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 145.

that is, aspects of Cupid in the Courtly Love tradition and in Petrarchan conceits, gives Spenser the authority for the substitution. It is important to note that Spenser retains Ficino's concept of simple love but differs in his use of the symbol of Cupid. In Spenser it is Venus who comes to represent freedom and rescue, the ultimate attributes of reciprocal love, while capture and possession are roles assigned to the Cupid-Mars figures, Scudamore and Busirane. When we compare the central action which takes place in the House of Busirane - rescue - to that of the Venus Temple - capture - Spenser's ideal, couched in the language of Courtly Love directly affects our understanding of Britomart's role.

Although Spenser highlights this comparison through a reversed chronological presentation of these events (a reversal most appropriate to the dream-like aspect of his world of Faerie), we will begin by considering in section (ii) the capture in the Temple of Venus; in section (iii) we will consider Britomart's rescue of Amoret.

ii. Capture

In the Temple of Venus the violent capture of Amoret is an action which through imagery of war becomes associated with the figures of Mars and Cupid. Unlike Ficino, who, as I have said, isolates Cupid as Love and Mars as War, it is precisely here that Spenser aligns Cupid and Mars on the side of aggressive simple love. For example, Amoret is referred to as "the glorious spoyle of beautie" (IV-x-58); she is the prize in the war of love. Scudamore, "Cupid is Man" (IV-x-54) displays the force of a Mars figure throughout this canto; we are reminded that Mars is

the patron god of lover-knights³¹ and that Cupid is the traditional vehicle for the theme of Love as War, when Scudamore uses his shield emblazoned with the "Killing bow/ And Cruell shafts," (IV-x-55) to effect the capture of Amoret. Very clearly this kind of love is aggressive and Cupid is a figure for aggression.

Scudamore's truculent capture of Amoret is an action typical of the Courtly lover, revealing retroactively a new dimension of the rescue in Cantos xi and xii of Book III. Through both the rescue and capture sequences we understand Scudamore and Busirane, lover and jailer respectively, as adherents to the traditions of Courtly love. In one we see the aggressive norms of the tradition:

Tho; shaking off all doubt and shame fast feare
Which Ladies love, I heard, had never wonne
Amongst men of worth, I to her stepped near
And by lily hand her laboured up to reare (IV-x-53);

and in the other the tortuous excesses which this tradition may foster:

"And her before the vile Enchaunter sate,
Figuring straunge characters of his art;
With living blood her those characters wrate,
Dreadfully dropping from her dying hart,
Seeming transfixed with a cruell dart;
And all perforce to make her him to love
Ah who can love the worker of her smart?
A thousand charmes he formerly did prove,
Yet thousand charmes could not her steadfast hart remove." (III-xii-31)

Both Scudamore and Busirane, as we see in the verses quoted above, employ the power of Cupid in their efforts to win Amoret. Scudamore does so recognizing that he must shake off "all doubt and shame fast feare" because these qualities are ignoble in the traditional lover-knight and he is "Cupid's Man." Busirane is an "Enchaunter", a practitioner of dark magical "art" bent on subjugating Amoret "to make her him to love."

³¹ Henry Gibbons Lotspeich, Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser, p. 80.

Both then are Cupid's men and like the destructive Cupid,

That man and beast with power imperious
Subdeweth to his kingdome tyrannous (III-Xii-22)

both practise the martial arts of simple love. Like Ficino's general, Scudamore and Busirane attempt to possess the love object.

Busirane's methods are perhaps the more shocking. However behind Spenser's portrait of the "vile Enchanter" lies an interesting Neo-Platonic conception of Eros, one which is central to Ficino's discourse as well.

Turning to Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium we find: Eros is no longer just the 'daimon' of Diotima's description but has become a "sorcerer";

"Because in love there is all the power of enchantment."³²

Furthermore, there is a moral emphasis in Ficino's suggestion that:

The work of enchantment is the attraction of one thing by another because of a certain similarity in their nature³³

Spenser's Amoret, the 'little Venus', may be held enchanted by the forces of 'simple love', falling prey to Scudamore and Busirane, because she shares in their allegiance to Cupid and Mars. Thus Amoret's suffering in the House of Busirane depends upon her bondage to the Courtly principles of Ficino's 'simple love'. Chained and tortured, Amoret is, in fact, no different than the trophies which decorate the walls of her prison.

All about the listening walls were hung
 With warlike spoiles and with victorious prayes
 Of mightie Conquerors and Captaines strong,
 Which were whilome captived in their dayes
 To cruell love, and wrought their own decayes.

³² Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 199.

³³ Ibid., p. 199.

Like Spenser's description of the tapestries, which reveals the Art of Courtly Love to be patterned upon the Art of War, the lines quoted above simultaneously describe Cupid's "spoiles" and trace the essential moral similarity between Amoret and her captors; Amoret's suffering is related to all lovers who fall prey to Cupid and Mars in their adherence to the tenets of simple love.

In the Bower of Bliss for example, Guyon must unleash the "tempest of his wrathfulness" (II-xii-83) to rescue Verdant from the enchantment of Acrasia. Caught in the "subtle web" of "pleasant sin" (II-xii-77) Verdant is modelled in the image of the mythic sleeping Mars "his warlike arms", "...hung upon a tree, / And his brave shield", "...fouly rased, that none the signs might see" (II-xii-80).³⁴ The illicit love of Aphrodite and Ares (or Venus and Mars) is the paradigm for this sequence and the conflict described here is both echoed and reversed in the Amoret-Busirane episode. Acrasia, of course, is not a true figure for the generative love which is an attribute of the Venus archetype for Britomart; but the parallel between Acrasia and Amoret is close. Once she is caught by that "subtle net" (II-xii-81) the Palmer throws, the "subtle web" (II-xii-77) of the spell Acrasia spins is ended. As the reverberating images indicate Acrasia is destroyed by that which she contains within. Amoret, as I have demonstrated above, is also the victim of her own inclinations; yet Acrasia's breast "bare to ready spoil" (II-xii-78) and Amoret's "...brest all naked", "...despoiled quight" (III-xii-20), are images offered to us for contrast. The parallel is only in the moral situation; both are to be faulted for just even

³⁴ Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 89.

though Acrasia is covered with the sweat of her "late sweet toil" and Amoret is "freshly bleeding" in defence of her "stedfast hart" (III-xii-31). Although Acrasia exemplifies lust indulged and Amoret overcomes the temptation of lust, the recurring echoes in the imagery interlace the Bower of Bliss and the House of Busirane sequences; only as Britomart abstains from murdering Busirane, do we understand the essential unity in the absolutes required in the moral universe Guyon inhabits and the absolute the Knight of Love must learn to dispense. Neither Acrasia nor Busirane is destroyed. Both are bound in chains of adamant as Spenser emphasizes the need to control lust, to temper in fact, all the actions of Love.

iii. Rescue

In the Bower of Bliss and the House of Busirane we have seen that when Cupid and Mars are aligned, Love may be despoiled; but Spenser, through the character of Britomart, resolves this problem. Britomart will rescue Love from its bondage to both lust and wrath. She will free herself from the bonds of simple love and in so doing restore love to Venus. To effect the rescue Britomart will not have to endure Amoret's experience. We shall see below that the wounds they symbolically share are the testimony of a shared experience.

In Book III, canto xii, Britomart's wound (st. 33) is the symbolic counterpart of Amoret's torture. Just as Amoret's wounds "...dyde in sanguine red her skin all snowy cleene" (III-xii-20), so too does Britomart receive a wound "...into her snowie chest/ That littel drops empurpled her faire brest". Amoret's wound is linked to the despoiling of her honour (st. -20 l. 1. 1-4) as is Britomart's: Britomart however, like Guyon, reacts with Mars-like wrath "To give him (Busirane) the reward

for such vile outrage dew" (sf. 33 1.9). Here she reacts to lust's wounds with the Mars aspect of her personality, intending to use violence in answer to violence. Having used this martial aspect of her character (III-xi-53,04) Britomart successfully overcame the temptations of the Masque of Love, whose figures "drown the frayle soule in deepe delight" (II-xii-73). But now Amoret, as her name suggests, must mitigate Britomart's martial instincts. She begs for Busirane's restoration. Her pleas overriding Britomart's ferocity (III-xii-34), allow the reversal of the magic spell cast by Busirane.

When Britomart assumes Scudamore's task (the rescue of Amoret), she also assumes the martial attributes of his role as Courtly Lover, but she quickly realizes that the value of Cupid's trappings are "wastefull emptiness" (III-xi-53) and in the decorative tapestries which "woven with gold and silke so close and nere/ That the rich metall lurked priveily," she finds icons of deceit and treachery. These tapestries like the "discoloured snake whose hidden snares/ Through the greene gras his long bright burnished back declares-" alert Britomart to the transformations of Eros Cupid effects. Britomart may be momentarily dazed by the splendour of the tapestries but she overcomes her initial trepidation and reacts to these depictions of Cupid's conquests in the same way that Venus responds to Scudamore's theft of Amoret: Venus is with "terror quelled" (O.E.D. p. 1639- Quell: to crush or overcome) at the sight of Scudamore's shield emblazoned with Cupid's heraldry; similarly Britomart is dazed (O.E.D. p. 457- Daze: to stun, to confuse, to overpower) by the lavish decoration surrounding Cupid's empty victories. Overwhelmed and yet ultimately disengaged (IV-x-56-1.4), both Venus and Britomart have perceived the

vacuousness of simple love as it manifests itself in the Courtly Love tradition.

Because of the experience culled from the entire process of the rescue, Britomart abandons Mars and Cupid, and thus acknowledges her allegiance to Venus and to the principles of reciprocal love. In Venus the idea of freedom is elevated over that of bondage, and hence the idea of rescue over that of capture. In the hermaphroditic Venus figure, the paradigm for Britomart's actions becomes apparent as we see the free flow of love established over the idea of love as bondage:

And all about her neck and shoulders flew
 A flock of little loves, ...
 But like to Angels playing heavenly toys,
 The whilest their eldest brother was away.
 Cupid their eldest brother; he loves
 The wide kingdome of love with lordly sway,
 And to his law compells all creatures to obey (IV-x-42).

Although Cupid himself is absent from the Temple of Venus, it is the bondage of Cupid's "law" which Scudamore enforces by his capture of Amoret. He tells us that she:

...often prayed, and often me besought
 Sometime with tender teares to let her goe.
 Sometime with witching smyles; but yet, for nought
 That ever she to me could say or doe,
 Could she he wished freedome for me woore (IV-x-58).

Through this dialectic of rescue and capture, freedom and bondage, Spenser voices his traditional neo-Platonic stance, finally separating the arts of Love and War by presenting the power of Love as a liberating force. The story of Florimell and Marinell in Book IV, enforces this theme.

Florimell's piteous lament to the "Gods of seas..." (IV-xii-28), in which she begs to be delivered, "hence out of this dungeon strong, / In which I daily dying am too long;" is part of the sequence of inter-

laced episodes describing Love which brings suffering (IV-xii-8) and imprisonment. The story of Florimell and Marinell also exemplifies the liberating power of love, for even the prophecy of Proteus, that Marinell's "decay should happen by a mayd" (IV-xii-28), is finally overcome. Elements of Courtly, or simple love abound in this story. One of the dominant manifestations of Courtly Love within the tradition, in Book IV and particularly in this story, is the proximity of love to death revealing yet another negative aspect of the results of simple love. When Florimell's lament is heard by Marinell he becomes "so sicke of love", "that lenger he note stand upright/ But to his bed was brought, and layd above,/ Like ruefull ghost, unable to stirre or move move" (IV-xii-19). Yet this same negation of being is turned to a positive end when the lovers, brought together without the fear of death that love may create, drive death away and restore strength and life in each other. Here we have another example of reciprocal love-- in which each takes possession of himself through the loved one. That is, by dying to himself, becoming "like ruefull ghost", the lover comes to life once more in his beloved. In the words of Ficino, if-

...the general possesses others through himself; the lover takes possession of himself through another, and the farther each of the lovers is from himself, the nearer he is to the other, and though dead in himself, he comes to life again in the other.³⁵

Thus the bond of Eros, or reciprocal love, is finally shown to be a life-giving force; this happy union, like the marriage of the Medway and the Thames that culminates in Book IV, presents a paradigm for all the lovers in this book as they struggle amidst blood and death

³⁵ Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 145.

in an effort to separate Love and War and to achieve a natural harmony and friendship.

Spenser accords with traditional Neo-Platonic concepts of Eros by subjugating Cupid and his "Laws" and by elevating Love. I have found that once more, Spenser patterns his narrative action upon a popular Renaissance metaphor which has its source in the Commentary of the poet-philosopher, Ficino. There we read that Mars must follow and not precede Venus: that is, "boldness" must be the "foot follower of love, not love of boldness".³⁶ I think the mottoes in Busirane's palace are significantly illuminated when we recognize that Spenser echoes Ficino's thought in both the narrative action and in this instance, in the very language he uses. For example, Spenser allows the inscriptions in Busirane's palace to advise boldness (III-xi-49, 51); yet he specifically qualifies this advice by depicting in the tapestries the enslavement which occurs when the boldness of Cupid is victorious. Thus the inscriptions which advise Britomart to "Bee Bold" (st. 50, 53), are in fact negated by the information symbolically conveyed by the tapestries in the House of Busirane. Now we understand why Britomart turns away from the glistening gold door towards the "yron door" upon which is written the enigmatic dictum which derives from Ficino's Doctrine of Eros - "Be not too bold". Her freely willed choice rejects Mars and Cupid, making them indeed mere "foot followers" of Venus. Her militance is tempered by the dawning understanding of reciprocal love, reminding us that "Conquerors and Captaines strong" inevitably bring about their own destruction by their adherence to Cupid's code of "cruell love". In turning toward

³⁶Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 177.

the "iron door" Britomart places herself outside the tradition of courtly love and before the steadfast reality of a love tempered by Venus. Thus through Britomart's action, Cupid is displaced by Venus; the Courtly code which insists that love relationships should be conducted as if lovers were adversaries, gives way in Spenser to a more generous and Humanistic concept of Love. Spenser steers his narrative in the current of Renaissance Neo-Platonism which above all holds that:

...Love is free and rises of its own accord in free will, which not even God, who decreed that it should be free in the very beginning, controls. 37

Through the action of the rescue, a delineation of character occurs. The rescue of Amoret demonstrates the triumph of Venus over Mars within Britomart. She binds Busirane as in the myth, Venus bound Mars³⁸ and in doing so she harmonizes the Mars aspect of her divided nature with the generative Venus within her.

This action of rescue is integral to delineating Britomart's character. Through her rescue of Amoret, Britomart rescues aberrant aspects of herself and achieves inner unity. Spenser highlights Britomart's divided and conflicting nature through a rhetoric which supports the very meaning of rescue. In short, the poet's imagery of division points again to the necessity of resolving the conflict of Mars and Venus that we have already seen.

Division imagery reinforces the psychological landscape of Book III's final action. These rhetorical patterns describe and moreover verify, the divided nature of Britomart's character and thus persuade the reader to see the significance of the conflict along the philosophical

³⁷ Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 177.

³⁸ Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, p. 89.

lines we have been considering. Although the reader may focus upon the meaning carried by Britomart through the mythological dimension of the narrative, this symbolic meaning is also supported by the detailed imagery of the rhetoric.

The meaning of the encounter between Britomart and Scudamore for example, may be verified through the rhetoric surrounding the encounter. Their meeting may seem related to the rescue of Scudamore's love, Amoret, through cause and effect, but the unity of the two narrative events, the encounter between Scudamore and Britomart and the rescue of Amoret by Britomart, is achieved not so much by this rare fluidity of the narrative's chronological progression as by Spenser's development of division imagery. In the following analysis we will see that the reconciliation basic to the symbolic meaning of the Britomart-Amoret rescue sequence (III-xii) arises directly from the imagery initiated in Book III, Canto xi.

In the stanzas below the imagery of division provides the key to the meaning of the narrative situation. First, Scudamore's attitude (both physical and spiritual) is described as disjointed and then we realize that Britomart shares his predicament. Her bold pursuit of Olyphant is shown to be an errant course demonstrating her Mars aspect, the strife within which allowed her to stray from the path of her quest.

"It was not Satyrane, whome he did feare,
 But Britomart the flowre of chastity;
 For he the powre of chaste hands might not beare,
 But always did their dread encounter fly;
 And now so fast his feet he did apply,
 That he has gotten to a forest neare
 Where he is shrowed in security.
 The wood they enter, and search everie where;
 They searched diversly, so both divided were.

(III-xi-6)

Fayre Britomart so long him followed,
 That she at last came to a fountaine sheare,
 By which there lay a knight all wallowed
 Upon the grassy ground, and by him neare /
 His habergeon, his helmet and his speare:
A little off his shield was rudely throwne,
 On which the winged boy in colours cleare
 Depeincted was, full easie to be knowne,
 And he thereby, where ever it in field was showne."
 (III, xi; 7 my emphasis)

Spenser's images of "division" are in the foreground of this scene. Providing the perspective, are Spenser's rhetorical twistings which ultimately confuse time and place and contribute to a sense of confusion.

Scudamore has "rudely throwne" aside his armour; the coat of mail, helmet, spear and shield are divided from their owner. This divested attire symbolizes his divided inner self, a division which we understand derives from melancholy, since the "ground" upon which he is splayed (st. 7. 11 3-4) is traditionally associated with the melancholy humour. Scudamore's shield points us to the source of his melancholy; on it the figure of Cupid is depicted, serving as a reminder of his frustrated objectives--the rescue of Amoret. Amoret, raised with Pleasure, the daughter of Cupid and Psyche, is pledged to Scudamore, who is "Cupid's Man". This association of Amoret and Cupid is made in the genealogy, catalogued in the Garden of Adonis (III-vi-50-53), and here it seems to indicate not only Amoret's connection to Pleasure, but that Cupid in harmony with Psyche (spirit), loses his negative attributes. As Scudamore throws aside his shield, he symbolically abandons the conciliatory aspect of the task to which he is pledged. His despair may be contrasted then, to the "colours cleare" on the shield; their clarity serving as a contrast to the physical evidence of Scudamore's 'defacement' through despair. Like Verdant who divests himself of his armour

["...it great pity was to see/ Him his nobility so foul deface" (II-xii-79)]; we find Scudamore "His face upon the ground", "...did groveling ly" (st. 8). Spenser stresses inner division: Scudamore groans "as if his heart were peeces made" (st. 8), enduring a sorrow which parallels Amoret's torture. Moreover, both Amoret and Scudamore suffer from "the sharpe steel" which "doth rive her heart in tway". This pattern of division imagery is continued later in Book III as the fire which divides Scudamore from Amoret "did itselife divide..." (st. 25) admitting Britomart to the presence of the tapestries, in themselves describing Cupid's transmutations and divisions (st. 38).

Britomart wanders and is 'divided' from herself and her quest as Mars becomes predominant in her makeup. She becomes lost even as she boldly (III-xi-5) pursues Ollyphant, the homosexual (st. 4 l.4) embodiment of "filthy lust" (st. 4). The imagery of division begins as one would expect, when Britomart loses track of Ollyphant. Significantly, she searches for Ollyphant expecting "T'employ her puissance..." (st. 4) in the rescue of the young man Ollyphant seeks to ravish. Britomart intends to use force to effect the rescue of the young man, just as she later will expect to rescue Amoret through martial power.

Like Scudamore's despair, Britomart's Mars-like aggression is a divisive quality and an impediment to action. The symbolic "fountaine sheare" by which Scudamore and Britomart meet, is thus ultimately related to the larger metaphor of division-- Britomart-- in whom Mars and Venus, Love and War, are divisive and in whom Mars as conflict, is thereby dominant.

The imagery of division seems to proceed from the central symbol of the fountain divided. For example, since "sheare" may mean both divided and shiny or clear, the fountain image serves to link the division of soul which the melancholy humour produces, to the "colours cleare"

describing Cupid. Once more, the image of the "fountain sheare" recalls and so emphasizes the meaning of the line (st. 6), "They searched diversely, so both divided were"; Britomart, divided from Satyrane, comes by hazard upon the divided fountain - for "sheare" also indicates a swerving from ones course of action. The fountain image, reinforced by the division images discussed above, is thus a central image introducing us to the inner experience of Scudamore's despair, while accurately reflecting the narrative situation. It is no surprise to find that Spenser in the next stanza deliberately reinforces this idea through his rhetoric. First through rhyme we progress from the closing couplet of stanza 6, to the "fountain sheare". We are then taken from "the fountain sheare" to "by him neare" (l. 14), after which we are led into the contradictory phrase "a little off" (l. 16). Finally "rudely throwne" suggesting both despair and division, completes the physical and psychological landscape.

As we saw earlier, rescue from "loves spoyles" is finally effected through Venus and not through Mars. The force which rejects division and restores wholeness is not Mars, but Venus. These unifying attributes are symbolically conveyed in stanzas 13-15 of Canto XI, as Britomart applies "Fit medicine" to Scudamore's grief. Spenser allows us a glimpse of the positive characteristics which Britomart must cultivate. He momentarily abandons the rhetoric of division and allows Britomart's "feeling words" literally to raise Scudamore up, enabling her to redress (st. 20) his sorrow. The restorative grace in her "words" and in her "hand", "at length persuaded him (Scudamore) to rise" (st. 20). With these Venus-like attributes in mind, the reader may proceed with Britomart to the rescue of Amoret. Britomart's empathy is expressed best by Scudamore who conveys to us the reality of Britomart's position.

when he exclaims: "...what couldst thou more/ If shee were thine and thou as now am I." (III-xi-19).

V. Reciprocal Love:

The figure of the hermaphroditic Venus symbolizes the resolution of the Mars-Venus conflict expressed in the imagery of division discussed above; for the integration of aggression and eroticism it contains directly exhibit~~s~~ the unifying and restorative powers of love.³⁹ Moreover, the exotic iconography of this Venus, so thoroughly catalogued by critics,⁴⁰ also describes the reciprocal qualities of love. In 'Venus Hermaphroditos' two divine figures of love, Hermes and Aphrodite join,⁴¹ merging male and female attributes in the Venus figure and suggesting that mutual exchange of identities which Ficino finds central to the achievement of reciprocal love. In this figure division is thus fully reconciled.

Through this Venus therefore, we move beyond Plato's description of the two-fold nature of Love symbolized by the Earthly and Heavenly Venuses.⁴² Ficino's interpretation of these Venuses (the Angelic Mind directing the heavens and the World-Soul containing the power of generation) is included in the symbolism of the Venus hermaphrodite who carries both the spiritual and generative attributes of Love.⁴³

³⁹ Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, p. 182.

⁴⁰ Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene, Book Four, ed. Ray Hefner from The Works of Edmund Spenser, A Variorum Edition, eds. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, Frederick Morgan Padelford (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), p. 231.

⁴¹ Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, p. 163.

⁴² Plato, The Symposium, section 180 c, pp. 45-46.

⁴³ Marcilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 142.

Distinguished by mythographers as the Cyprian Venus (E.O.

IV-X-40), this figure is significantly linked to the androgynous Isis we meet in Book V. It is likely then, that Spenser chose this Venus as the vehicle for the idea of reciprocal love so that he could include within the range of this symbol the spiritual and generative aspects of the prophecies initiated in Book III and fulfilled in Book V through the royal figure of Isis. Spenser thus elevates Britomart's quest beyond its earthly goal and suggests its transcendental implications through the Venus hermaphrodite. Only she possesses "The fatal purpose of divine foresight" which she applies in "destined descents" (III-iii-2).

This visionary aspect of the goddess is projected by the crystalline image of the altar upon which Venus rests. The altar image, so clearly part of the iconography of Love Books III and IV set forth, will be contrasted with Spenser's description of Cupid's more opaque altar. My contrast will provide convincing evidence of the change in values Spenser highlights in Book III as he moves from Simple Love to his concern in Books IV and V, the reciprocal flow of Love characterizing both Friendship and Justice.

In the analysis which follows we will see that although Cupid and Venus share some aspects of a common iconography it is differentiated by its application. In Cupid, worldly values alone are displayed; in Venus there is a conjunction of temporality and eternity. Cupid, blindfolded and accompanied by a dragon (symbolic of chaos, as in Book III of Ovid, Metamorphoses) whose vision is almost irrevocably impaired, is distinguished from Venus. The dragon cannot see at all and she cannot be seen fully for she is veiled from the sight of the profane and has as her familiar, a serpent (here, as I will later demonstrate, symbolic

of generation and cosmic unity). While both figures are linked by these symbolic accoutrements they are specifically differentiated by Spenser's description of the altars upon which they rest. Cupid's altar, as we shall see, is accessible and easily described, while that of Venus defies description (like Venus it is thus 'veiled') and gives up its meaning only when viewed as part of the imagery of transcendence accommodated by the hermaphroditic figure. Through iconographic variations, Spenser seems to invite a comparative study of Venus and Cupid; the poetic statement which emerges from the comparison of these two symbols of simple and reciprocal Love respectively, reveals not only Spenser's view of the sacred nature of generative love, but also its place in the prophetic vision which inspires Britomart's quest.

VI. The Two Altars of Love:

In the House of Busirane, the blindfolded "Image" of Cupid stands on "...an Altar built of Pretious stone/ Of passing valew and of great renowne" (III-xi-47). Like the altar upon which he stands, Cupid, as we have come to expect, represents only 'passing value'; 'passing' of course, includes the meanings of both 'surpassing excellence' and 'transient' both of which are carried in an ironic sense by the juxtaposition of value and fame (O.E.D. pp. 1442-1443). Spenser here suggests that the value of the altar (and the tradition of simple love it symbolizes) is merely 'passing'; that is, like the passing pageant in Busirane's castle, it is transient and ephemeral. At the same time, by the close juxtaposition of 'value' and 'renowne' the poet ironically voices the worldly opinion regarding this altar's fame and excellence.

In the Temple of Venus however, the "Goddess" --

"...did stand
 Upon an altar of some costly masse,
 Whose substance was uneth to understand;
 For neither pretious stone, nor durefull brasse,
 Nor shining gold, nor moldering clay it was;
 But much more rare and pretious to esteeme,
 Pure in aspect, and like to crystall glasse,
 Yet glasse was not, if one did rightly deeme;
 But being faire and briclike, likest glass did seeme."
 (IV-x-39)

Venus, unlike Cupid, stands on an unnamed substance which seems to surpass all nominal value. Beyond mutable clay and immutable gold, it is so "Pure in aspect" that even in appearance, its purity is manifest: "Pure in aspect", because of Venus' obvious astronomical connections also carries overtones of the astronomical meaning of aspect, that is, the way in which the heavenly bodies look upon each other or upon the earth from their relative positions. The meaning "appearance presented to the eye" (O.E.D. p. 107) is the primary one. The modifier, pure, seems to negate the illusionary quality which Spenser generally attributes to appearances (a commonplace for example, in criticism of the Bower of Bliss). The substance "like to crystall glasse" has a translucent quality which may be contrasted to Spenser's description of Cupid's more opaque altar. The Venus altar has a clarity which suggests the visionary aspect of the Goddess.

At this point perhaps we should recall other symbols in which glass is similarly used; the "Venus looking glass" and the "glassy globe" of Merlin's devising are, like the crystalline altar, important Venus images; they are vehicles of divination and are linked to the generative aspect of Venus. The iconography of the mirror-glass images suggests that Spenser's prophetic interpretation of generation is derived from the tradition which holds that "the reflection of an image within a mirror is an obvious analogy to reproduction."

For example, in the medieval poet Jean de Meun, the mirror is symbolic of the entire generative process "as well as a symbol of love's birth in the mirror of the eye".⁴⁴ The association of generation and prophecy is thus supported by Spenser's use of the glass symbol in the first prophecies and again in the Venus Temple. Following traditional usage Spenser links generation to prophetic vision by contrasting images of sight and cosmic unity to images of blindness and chaos. We remember that Venus' "divine foresight" is linked to "destined descents" (III-iii-2), and recognize that the images of glass serve as foil for what Spenser emphasizes as a mere facsimile of love, the "Image" of Cupid. Cupid's "Image" does not reflect a lineage of kings; that is, the "Image" of Cupid cannot mirror generative love. Unlike the visionary vehicles which are the property of Venus and so carry her percipient attributes, Cupid merely shines "with his owne light"--a light which is compared to Iris' "discoloured bow". The allusion to Iris reminds us that like the Greek Goddess who displays the rainbow as her sign, Cupid is not Love but merely a messenger of Love. The idea of reflection is also pertinent, for in nature, prismatic colours are reflected by means of a natural interior flaw. Thus Cupid's "owne light" is, in truth, only a reflection of the light of true love and is furthermore, a distortion of this spiritual light--"discoloured", suggesting a division of light or spirit, proceeding, we may conclude, from Cupid's inferior nature (O.E.D. p. 516). From Spenser's use of opaque light and impaired vision as metaphors for the lack of spirituality in Love, our thoughts are moved towards the ambiguity of the pleasures Cupid holds.

⁴⁴ Alan M. F. Gunn, The Mirror of Love, A Reinterpretation of The Romance of the Rose, pp. 267-268.

To further emphasize the difference between Venus and Cupid, Spenser, as I noted earlier, places a wounded dragon under Cupid's left foot; the wounds of the dragon are, of course, in the eyes which are "...with a shaft" impaired "That no man forth might draw, ne no man remedye." This enigmatic statement warrants consideration as does the equally obscure epitaph beneath Cupid's feet: "Unto the Victor of the Gods this bee". I suggest that indeed no man can remedy that blind chaos entwining Cupid's feet; only the "Victor of the Gods..." can endow Love with order and vision. Who is the Victor of the Gods? I will answer this question by turning away from Cupid to further consider the attributes of the Venus figure, for in Venus Spenser draws 'Love Victorious', the Venus Victrix who signifies the warfare of Love. This figure is the Venus who has donned the weapons of her opponent, Diana, Minerva and Mars.⁴⁵ Spenser, in joining this meaning to the Venus hermaphrodite, finds a fitting resolution to the Mars-Venus conflict which underlies the themes of Books III and IV.⁴⁶ This conjunction of mythic figures within the hermaphroditic symbol is described by Alastair Fowler in his discussion of Book III as the Book of Minerva and Venus; this study also provides a detailed analysis of the iconography of Britomart as Minerva or Venus Victrix, concluding that Britomart in this aspect of her character, ends the destructive tyranny of Cupid which the dragon symbol describes.⁴⁷ The iconographic studies of both Alastair Fowler and Edgar Wind support the idea I have put forward; however neither one of these critics has recognized how for Spenser this Venus, who "...in shape and beauty" excels "All

⁴⁵ Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, pp. 91-92.

⁴⁶ Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 130-131.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 128.

other Idols which the heathen adore", is superior to the mere "Image" of Cupid before whom:

...all the people that ample hous
Did to that image bowe, their humble knee
And oft committed fowle Idolatree (III-xi-49).

Clearly the worship of Cupid is idolatrous; but the worship of Venus and therefore true Love; is a superior pursuit. The Love she symbolizes is spiritual, more refined, and as he describes the Temple of Venus, Spenser's language now indicates this change in values; as he moves from simple to reciprocal Love, from Cupid to Venus, Spenser's metaphors draw from Nature and point towards restorative grace. For example, Venus is queen of the seas, the wind, the abundant earth and the flowers of desire (IV-x-44-46). As Goddess of Love, she is the very source of Creation, "the root of all that joyous is" (IV-x-47). Below, I quote in full Jayne Sears Reynolds on the divine creativity of Love. The importance of the creation myth in Book IV is paramount, rivalling the myth in the Garden of Adonis in significance and foreshadowing Spenser's use (in Book V) of the creation myth from The Symposium. Love, as symbolized in the hermaphrodite, is the image of order and unity upon which the poet will build a subtle definition of Justice:

In order to emphasize the power of Love as the creating force, Ficino breaks down the the Plotinian process into clear steps in a time order, describing for each sphere of being the effect of Love moving over chaos, and it was from this that the Renaissance theory of creation as Love's giving order to Chaos had its immediate source, though the ultimate source⁴⁸ is of course the passage on creation in the Timaeus.

From Spenser's imagery of natural growth describing this "Great God

⁴⁸ Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 126, note 20.

of men and women, queen of the air, / Mother of Laughter, and welspring of blisse", we are made aware of the elements of creation, earth, air, fire and water as they are gathered into one repository, the hermaphroditic Venus.

Traditionally the androgynous figure is, for the alchemist, an emblem of the fifth element, the quintessence of generative power. The philosophers' stone commonly described as a crystal is another symbol of this power, one imbued with the same divine mystery. Like the Altar of the Venus hermaphroditos it is truly a substance "Uneath to understand"; unless of course, one has achieved the highly integrated state of being the symbol represents - the golden state of spiritual unity. Both Venus and the Altar she stands upon seem to express this ancient composite of unity, known to practitioners of hermetic lore as the fixed volatile:

Through the alchemical art the male and female principles unite. The issue of this marriage is the philosophers' stone, the emblem of man's perfection - a hermaphrodite. This perfection is attained by uniting the fugitive-female with the fixed male.⁴⁹

The volatile is the evaporating mercury remaining at the bottom of the vessel; the reconciliation of the fixed and the volatile is represented by the caduceus. In Spenser and the Numbers of Time⁵⁰

Alastair Fowler discusses at length the variety of interpretive possibilities for this important symbol. His conclusions support the interpretations of the Venus Altar I have suggested above. His

⁴⁹ Kurt Seligman, Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion (New York: The Universal Library, Grosse and Dunlap, 1968), p. 157.

⁵⁰ Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 157-159, p. 213.

argument suggesting the caduceus as an alternate symbol for the hermaphrodite, alludes to the eternal character of the generative process. Thus, by symbolic expansion, the glass-like attributes of Venus Hermaphrodite, including the altar, carry the same symbolic meaning as does the caduceus.

While I do not mean to overlay the poetry with images of the alchemical process, it seems likely that Spenser refers to this sacred art as a metaphor for spiritual enlightenment using the symbolism of alchemy to remind us of the sacred nature of the generative power. Venus' Altar, by both the ambiguous yet luminous quality of its description, seems yet another emblem of the philosophers' stone; and this elusive substance becomes part of the spiritual symbolism of Britomart's quest including within its metonymic range the glassy globe and the Venus mirror which prophesy the prolific temporal union of Britomart and Artegall.

The alchemical metaphor aside, even the beauty which Venus possesses must be understood as a composite principle, a union of opposites for which Venus is the vehicle. Thus her beauty is a manifestation of her power to achieve concord or union over the variety (i.e. discord) of elements in which lies the origin of all things. Pico della Mirandola writing "On the General Nature of Beauty" outlines the philosophical meaning of the beauty which is at the heart of Spenser's portrait of Venus. Here is a brief excerpt containing the essence of his meaning:

And since the constitution of created things it is necessary in that the union overcomes the strife (otherwise the thing would perish because its elements would fall apart) - for this reason it is said by the poets that Venus loves Mars, because Beauty, which we call Venus, cannot subsist without contrariety;

and that Venus tames and mitigates Mars, because the tempering power restrains and overcomes strife and hate which persists between the contrary elements.⁵¹

Not only does Venus excel all others in beauty, but this beauty may also be understood as a manifestation of her power over time. The justification of this last inference lies in the meaning of the symbol which accompanies the figure of the Goddess; the snake which "marks Venus as enduring while time endures"⁵² Venus' companion is not a symbol of chaos like Cupid's wounded dragon, but is instead that symbol of perfection and eternity, the serpent which bites its own tail:

A serpent's tail turning back on itself is an image of eternity or perfection...Time issues from Eternity (and)...the linear progression of the serpent depends on its attachment to the topmost sphere where its tail coils into a circle.⁵³

Professor Wind, in the last part of this statement refers to the 'descent' of a spiritual force, showing that this movement is compatible with the serpent's "continuous presence" in the "supercelestial heaven". This idea is basic to Neo-Platonism and is the foundation for Miss Williams' remark quoted above. Thus Venus, the symbol of reciprocal flow in Nature, is encircled and fixed, participating in both time and eternity:

...both her feete and legs together twyned
Were with a snake, whose head and tail were fast
combined. (IV-x-40)

Although bound, her upper torso and head are free and responsive (st. 55,56) suggesting the conventional correspondences between the

⁵¹ Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, p. 89.

⁵² Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 127.

⁵³ Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, p. 266.

head, reason and the traditional freedom of the spirit. Her passions specifically are bound, for creative generation occurs within the boundaries of time in eternity. This image completes a pattern of binding imagery, the outlines for which are discernible in the Bower of Bliss (II-xii-77,82). There Venus-Acrasia, once again veiled in a "subtle web", seduces Verdant-Mars (st.80). The sequence finally shows her as bound -- 'sub telum', first under the net thrown by the Palmer and ultimately in diamond chains, "chains of adamant" (st. 82) (O.E.D. p. 20). With similar chains Britomart binds Busirane (III-xii-41) and causes "Those dreadful flames" of unbridled passion to be "quenched quite like a consumed torch." The crystalline or diamond chains of the binding imagery are part of the Venus-Mars 'leit-motif' culminating in this final image of the snake which encircles the hermaphrodite. Since "adamant" or diamond is an element having "contradictory and fabulous properties" (O.E.D. p. 20), it seems likely that this is the glassy substance of both the chains and the altar. The caduceus, the altar and the idol of Venus itself are all intricately related to the symbolism of the loadstone and ultimately binding imagery too partakes of its meaning, signifying the unity of spiritual perfection.

Bondage by the snake also suggests that the passions are ordered and by this limitation their finiteness is expressed. Limit, characteristic of value,⁵⁴ delineates both order and variety (an example may be simply drawn from the grammatic progression of good-better-best) and is, at this point in The Faerie Queene, a fit statement, relevant to

⁵⁴Hiram Haydn, The Counter Renaissance (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1960), p. 293.

the hierarchy of Nature as well as the iconography of the Deity who presents Nature's processes.

The symbolic meanings of Venus seem to be a natural evolution of the prophecies in Book III. The total iconography of the hermaphrodite reinforces both the worldly (generative) and heavenly (spiritual) aspects of these earlier prophecies; for it is Venus who represents the sum of the elements and who has as her essential characteristic the transcendent quality of creativity. Like Britomart, she represents a creative conjunctio which Spenser in the first prophecy compares to an arbor vitae: "...that Tree, Whose big embodied branches shall not lin/ Till they to heavens high forth stretched bee."

Like the true nature of reciprocal love, the nature of Venus and the substance she rests upon, are veiled from the understanding of such as Scudamore. We may appreciate however, that because this figure is hermaphroditic, she fully embodies the principle of reciprocal flow and is thus the perfect symbol of Eros, the force which for Renaissance artists and philosophers:

reconciles and resolves the substantial diversity of the elements of being by letting them be recognized as subjects and as central points of one and the same dynamic function.⁵⁵

Ernst Cassirer points out that Ficino's "Doctrine of Eros" had greater impact upon the Renaissance view of art than in any other philosophical sphere. The tension which describes the 'coincidentia oppositorum' becomes a practical problem for the artist seeking aesthetic harmony. In Spenser, the creation myth becomes a vehicle which expresses the meeting of polarities in a concrete imaginative form and in the

⁵⁵ Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, p. 133:

hermaphroditic Venus both the form and its mediator, Eros are represented.

Shakespeare's image of Cleopatra as "Isis", the "serpent of old Nile" (Antony and Cleopatra, L.v-26) and Donne's heroine in The Second Anniversarie participate in this symbolic tradition. Donne describes:

Shee who was such a Chainé as Fate employes,
To bring mankind, all Fortunes it enjoys;
So fast, so even wrought, as one would think,
No Accident, could threaten any link.⁵⁶ (l.l. 142-146)

Thus Spenser, in making Venus a hermaphrodite creates a poetic figure for this central idea of Neo-Platonism in the Renaissance.

Because of the complex interplay between the ideas of vision and generation, the Venus who "Syre and mother is herselfe alone/ Begets and eke conceives ne needeth other none" (IV-x-41) emerges as the only figure in The Faerie Queene qualified to identify both the male and female polarities of a love relationship.⁵⁷ Yet Scudamore "with happy eye" seeks out Amoret in the heart of the Venus temple. Spenser surrounds Scudamore's capture of Amoret with a thick cluster of eye images (st. 48, 55, 56) to emphasize that the capture effected in the name of blind Cupid, represents non-recognition of Being. Recognition, if understood to mean a clear vision of the lover's identity or fullness of Being, is an attribute without which reciprocal love cannot exist. As a metaphor for Being it is employed by Spenser as a natural extension of the visionary aspect of Merlin's prophecies.

⁵⁶ John Donne, The Second Anniversarie, from John Donne: The Anniversaries, ed. Frank Manely (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), p. 96.

⁵⁷ Robert Ellrodt, Neo-Platonism in the Poetry of Spenser, p. 130.

Spenser's idea of Love however, proceeds from the meanings discussed in relation to the caduceus, the altar and the Venus figure; it does not now include Cupid; the poet focuses instead upon the Venus figure, a symbol which traditionally presents becoming and being - aspects of the temporal and the eternal while Cupid, as we have seen, can do no more than inspire "pretence" (IV-x-56), Scudamore's "claim" (O.E.D. p. 1577) to Amoret as a possession.

The implications which may be drawn from the above discussion suggest that through the Venus figure Spenser returns to the idea of an Eros whose function is to unify the human and the Divine; thus Venus by encompassing the finite and the eternal acts as a vehicle for the transition from myth to history. All her accoutrements share in this function; even the "glassy globe"-- wherein Britomart first receives the vision of the "Rose" and thus the impetus of her quest, is "Like the world itself" (III-ii-19). The glassy globe holds a vision of history yet is described with the same deliberate ambiguity as the Venus altar. If we remember these special qualities of both the altar and the Venus mirror, we realize that Spenser, in these images, prophesies both the physical and spiritual attributes of Britomart's Royal ascension. In the last stanza of his Epithalamion these same dimensions are brought together in an invocation which asks the "High heavens" to:

Poure out your blessing on us plentifully,
 And happy influence upon us raine,
 That we may raise a large posterity,
 Which from the earth, which they may long possess,
 With lasting happinesse,
 Up to your haughty pallaces may mount,
 And for the querdon of theyr glorious merit

May heavenly tabernacles there inherit,
Of blessed Saints for to increase the count."⁵⁸ (Epithalamion,
ll. 415-423)

The Venus looking glass reflects the temporal lineage of kings descended from Britomart while the veiled sexual mysteries of the hermaphroditic figure seem to indicate the ultimate unity of body and soul, time and eternity.

Spenser's use of these symbols seems complicated by the episodic structure of Books III and IV. In fact, if we collected all these prophetic or 'visionary' symbols we could easily see that they form a pattern of traditional symbolic meaning. Renaissance artists and philosophers like Spenser, perceived the symbolic value of the mirror to be that of an hourglass or clock.⁵⁹ From Spenser's use of mirror-crystal-glass images in The Faerie Queene we may identify Time as an integral part of the visionary imagery and we may locate the hermaphroditic Venus figure, appropriately enough as the primary symbolic source for images associated not only with eternal "heavenly tabernacles" but with generative love and consequently time and history.

The philosophical background supporting Spenser's use of the prophetic images may be found in the visionary experience of Nicolas Cusanus which revealed to him the relationship of history to eternity, and encouraged him to reaffirm the Platonic belief that: "everything visible is an image of the invisible, which we cannot see except in a mirror or an enigma."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Edmund Spenser, The Epithalamion, from Edmund Spenser Books I and II of The Faerie Queene, ed. Robert Kelloog and Olive Steele (New York: The Odyssey Press Inc., 1965), p. 482, lines 415-423.

⁵⁹ Edwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance, p. 82, footnote 50.

⁶⁰ Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, p. 53.

The validity of knowledge referring symbolically to historical existence is confirmed through the mirror or riddle, both of which become literary symbols of a spiritual force interacting with the material world. Plato's analogy in the 10th Book of The Republic and the famous mirror image from First Corinthians are just two sources for the analogue which has provided rich and provocative discussions for centuries. The work of Cusanus is particularly relevant because his philosophical perceptions acknowledge the aesthetic tradition which grew around the mirror analogy and extend the discussion beyond art, into history. Through the mirror, it was believed, knowledge of one's spiritual destiny was made available for pragmatic application. This belief is both confirmed and expanded upon in Ficino's Commentary on The Symposium where we learn that:

the mirror because of its hardness causes the spirit to stop on the surface; on account of its evenness and smoothness, it keeps it unbroken; on account of its reflection, it helps and increases the light of the spirit itself.⁶¹

In The Faerie Queene, Love, first perceived as an image in the Venus mirror, makes his initial assault on Britomart, motivating her quest. But in both the questing knight and the reader, a transition occurs. Both the reader and questor move from the contemplation of a reflection to the contemplation of a spiritual reality following the path suggested by the quotation above; or to use Spenser's metaphors - we move from blind Cupid to the enigmatic, visionary Venus.

⁶¹ Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 222

CHAPTER II

Eros and the Transition from Myth to History.

I. Love and Justice

Most critics agree that the dialectic of discordia concors is implicit in the metaphor of love as war⁶² and also understand Spenser's use of love as a metaphor expressing the union of opposites.⁶³ Thus far, the focus of this discussion has been the effect the idea of reciprocity had upon Spenser's handling of this theme: how the reciprocal flow of love is elevated above the tension of concord and strife and how through Eros the character of Britomart resolves these oppositions.

As Ernst Cassirer has written, Eros "lends man the heroic passion which breaks the bonds of finitude and reveals to him the infinite universe".⁶⁴ These teachings, which are central to the Florentine Academy and thus to English Platonism, also indicate that through an understanding of Eros the principles of Divine Justice may be revealed;

⁶²Susanne Murphv, "Love and War in Spenser's The Faerie Queene", Dialectic in Renaissance Literature, ed. Kenneth Atchity (Hamden Conn: Anchor Books, The Shoestring Press, 1972).

⁶³Thomas P. Roche Jr., The Kindly Flame, A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's Faerie Queene (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 56.

⁶⁴Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. James P. Pellygrove (Toronto: Nelson, 1953), p. 10.

for it is the "power of love which creates the sensible world and sustains the world of ideas".⁶⁵ In The Faerie Queene we move closer to understanding Spenser's idea of Justice through the unfolding of the "power of love" throughout Britomart's quest. Her presence in the Book of Justice unites Spenser's images of Love to his idea of Justice.

We will see below that Spenser presents the union between Love and Justice as the 'Rose' of Britomart's quest. Of course the quest for the Rose has a long history in Love poetry, but Spenser emerges as the first Renaissance poet to tie this traditional symbol of Love to a vision of Justice.⁶⁶ The Rose is associated with the ideals of Justice early in Book V. In V-i-1, the "gentle plants" of "those old times" are undermined by "the wicked seed of vice". Virtue however, "Rose up" and inspired with righteous anger and "heroike heart", "cropt the branches of the sient base". Here the pun of 'rose' specifies Love as the virtue which is linked to the heroic quest for Justice and in the last image, "sient" or 'sion' reminds us that "fruitful rankness" is defaced by the strength contained in the progeny of virtue the judicial power of figures such as Bacchus, Hercules and Artegall.

The rose then, is not the symbol of the Courtly Love tradition in the metaphoric structure of Book V. The religion of Venus and Cupid it symbolizes was never quite appropriate in a Christian society.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. James Pellygrove (Toronto: Nelson, 1953), p. 114.

⁶⁶ Alan M. F. Gunn, The Mirror of Love, A Reinterpretation of The Romance of the Rose, p. 71.

⁶⁷ Donald Howard, The Three Temptations; Medieval Man in Search of the World (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 115.

and so Spenser redefines the symbol suggesting a more 'modern' end to the Eros quest, an end more suited to the ideals of Tudor reign. Justice becomes the 'Rose' of the Love quest to accommodate the contemporary aspect of Book V. I suggest that it is for the same reasons that the androgynous Isis figure replaces Venus as the central symbolic figure in this book.

When we explored the symbolic meaning of the hermaphroditic Venus, we saw how this figure contained the major elements of the prophecies initiated in Book III. In Book V, the hermaphrodite, vehicle of reciprocal love, foundation of joy and generation, takes on, as Isis, still another tenor and thus a new dimension of meaning. This process has been described by Rosamond Tuve as follows:

It is not likeness between vehicle and tenor but likeness between two tenors conveyed by a single image which gives the vehicle its symbolic power and makes the vehicle into the structural link between the literal realities of the narrative and the allegorical translation.⁶⁸

The hermaphrodite as bisexual symbol permits the idea of Eros (the principle of reciprocal flow) to be carried into the arena of Justice so that the pagan symbol, Eros, is transformed. From being simply a Christian metaphor for Divine Love, Eros grows into a metaphor which demonstrates the reciprocal interaction of Absolute Justice, Equity and Mercy. Spenser thus clarifies his vision of Divine Love as it operates through human Justice. The Isis symbol which encompasses both love and law, helps the poet accomplish the transition from the pagan and mythic framework of Books III and IV to the Christian historical framework of the Book of Justice.

⁶⁸ Rosamond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, Some Medieval Books and their Posterity, p. 302.

Spenser moves backwards in time to select the Isis image; this suggests that he is seeking an historical symbol closer to the reality of the beginning of time. The movement is retrogressive when viewed from the golden perspective of Greek mythology but the parallels Spenser finds in the social and religious structures of Egypt are well suited to both the philosophic and topical aspects of his allegory. Moreover, through the historical veracity of the Isis symbol, the idea of Divine Love as the regulative power of the universe is made concrete.

Benivieni's Ode of Love demonstrates what I believe to be Spenser's bias in the Book of Justice:

I tell how Love from its celestial source
 In Primal Good flows to the world of sense;
 When it had birth; and whence;
 How moves the heavens, refines the soul, gives Laws
 To all...⁶⁹

Here the poetic tradition of Neo-Platonism, Spenser's philosophic touchstone, speaks of a world regulated by Love (notwithstanding the Scholastic tradition which holds more a scientific and intellectual view of a world governed by law).⁷⁰ The parallel view in The Faerie Queene is suggested by Alastair Fowler's interpretation of the Eros quest and its relation to the overall quest structure of the poem:

...the poem as a whole may be described as an allegorical expansion of Arthur's quest for Gloriana through reflections of her glory on individual ideals or images of virtue. In abstract terms, this is the quest of eros for the heavenly beauty, and as such it can find no fulfillment in any good short of the highest of all, good itself.⁷¹

⁶⁹Hiram Haydn, The Counter Renaissance, p. 311.

⁷⁰ibid. p. 310.

⁷¹Alastair Fowler, "Emanations of Glory" included in A Theatre for Spenserians, pp. 72-73.

Benivieni's association of "Love" and "Primal Good" as the source of law and Fowler's association of Eros, heavenly beauty and "good itself" both suggest that Justice as an "image of virtue" proceeds from Love.

Thus Eros yearns for Justice as a reflection of Divine Love. The pattern for this Neo-Platonic structure is described by Ficino in this way:

But certainly when we come of age, drawn by the natural light, we do yearn for the divine, and we all proceed, everyone in his own way, to the attainment of it: through Courage those who once received from the courage of God that light with the desire for courage, others through Justice, and others in like manner through temperance.⁷²

Spenser's vision of Justice expressed through Britomart and Artegall in the equitable (égal) marriage of Love and Justice, has the divine androgyne as its paradigm. Even the hermaphroditic structure present in the names of the two knights (modelled upon the Hermes-Aphrodite conjunction) suggest the union of the Many in the One and thus the figure of the hermaphroditic Isis.

The place of the hermaphrodite in the scheme of Creation is reinterpreted for the Renaissance imagination in The Commentary of Ficino, whose writings, as we shall see below, elucidate Spenser's symbolism in the Book of Justice. As Spenser extends the concept of reciprocal love (Eros) to include Justice he takes as his models not only the traditional myths of the Middle East but the Neo-Platonic image of Justice as a 'hermaphroditic' virtue. In so doing Spenser clearly weds Love and Justice attributing to both creative and regulative qualities in equal measure.

⁷² Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 160.

II. The Bisexual Attributes of Justice

The moon as a bisexual symbol appears in The Symposium where, through the Greek creation myth, Aristophanes tells of "the constitution of man and the modifications which it has undergone":

In the first place there were three sexes, not as with us, two, male and female; the third partook of the nature of both the others and has vanished, though its name survives. The hermaphrodite was a distinct sex in male and female... The reason for the existence of three sexes and for their being of such a nature is that originally the male sprang from the sun and the female from the earth, while the sex which was both male and female came from the moon which partakes of the nature of both sun and earth.⁷³

The image of the moon as bisexual reappears in Ficino's Commentary where now the relationship between Justice and the attributes of the bisexual moon is made specific:

They had three sexes: Male born from the sun; Females from the earth and bisexuals from the moon. The first type received the glow of God's Bravery, which is masculine; others as Temperance which is feminine; others as Justice which is bisexual. These three virtues in us are the offspring of another three which God possesses. In God these three are called Sun, Moon, and Earth, but in us, Male, bisexual and Female.⁷⁴

This Christianized interpretation of the Greek creation myth is significant in The Faerie Queene, for Spenser, like Ficino assigns the qualities of a hermaphrodite to the virtue of Justice. To my knowledge this aspect of the bisexual attributes of Justice has not been discussed by critics in relation to Book V, yet the parallels in this book are explicit. Bisexuality, whether understood through Britomart and the Mars-Venus conflict, or through Venus who symbolizes the resolution of this conflict, is first used in Books III and IV to

⁷³ Plato, The Symposium, pp. 59-60, section 1906.

⁷⁴ Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, p. 156.

illustrate the union of opposites through Love, and reciprocal love thus occupies our attention until Book V. Spenser then adds a further dimension to the pervasive hermaphroditic symbol; that of reciprocal flow in Justice. We will see below that the Amazonian cantos (which centre upon the relationship between Radigund and Artegall) and the Isis Temple sequence (which focuses upon the union of Britomart and Artegall), all contribute to our understanding of that dimension of Justice which is the realm of the moon. Until Book V the hermaphroditic symbol informs our understanding of reciprocal love; in this book Spenser expands the meaning of this symbol, stressing the parallels between reciprocity in Love and in Justice.

The clothing imagery which Spenser renders in great detail throughout the Amazonian cantos is, after the hermaphroditic symbol, the clearest indication that Spenser will associate Justice and bisexuality. For example, having lost both victory and the help of Talus:

"Then took the Amazon this noble knight,
Left to her will by his own wilful blame,
And caused him to be disarmed quight
Of all the ornaments of knightly name,
With which whylome he gotten had great fame:
Instead whereof she made him to be dight
In womens weeds that is to manhood shame,
And put before his lap an apron white
Instead of Curties and bases fit for fight." (V-v-20)

Artegall's broken sword (V-v-21) and women's dress signal his initiation into the experience of Justice. His "wilful" subjection to Radigund supports this reading. Artegall wilfully subjugates himself before Radigund, a figure repeatedly although negatively associated with the moon, the Neo-Platonic symbol of Justice.

We confirm this association first through the description of Radigund's shield, "...bedeckt/ Upon the bosse with stones that shined wide;/ As the faire Moone in her most full aspect/ That to the Moone it mote be like in each respect"; (V-v-3) and then Spenser describes her face, "Like as the Moone in foggie winters night/ Doth seeme to be her selfe, though darkened be her light"; (V-v-12) and finally the recurrence of images of Fortune (V-v-5) "chance" (V-v-10), and "doome" (V-v-17) serve to expand the link between Artegall as the Knight of Justice and the moon as a symbol of the origins of this virtue.

Spenser's emphasis on Artegall's dress (and like Scudamore, his need for re-dressing) and on Radigund's appearance as a moon figure, suggests that the subjugation he endures is linked to the 'negative' attributes of the moon. Fate, fortune and mutability are the traditional attributes of the moon symbol; yet Artegall's subjugation is not really typical of the fatalism we might find in the works of the classical Greek poets. Although we find him under the influence of the 'dark side' of the moon, the "crueltie of womenkynd" and of unlawful sovereignty (V-v-25), it is wilful subjugation and therefore more like a trial of initiation. He is made a slave to a figure of Fortune and his sword is replaced by the distaff he holds as he, like Hercules before him, spins his way into the experience of femininity. The distaff as a symbol of feminine authority (O.E.D. p. 537), somewhat mitigates the image of Artegall's "owne wilful blame", and the pledge (his "warelesse word") to serve Radigund. (V-v-17,20) However, imagery suggesting bondage to the moon does prevail as Artegall, judged by Spenser to be "justly damned" (V-v-17), is forced into prison and activity which seems to link him not only to Justice but

through Radigund to fate and fortune. That she is an instrument of the "luckless stars" (V-v-18) is apparent in the hanging of Sir Turpine whose destiny she fulfils despite Artegall's attempts to intervene.

The viability of bisexuality as a metaphor for Justice is established in Book V by the moon and clothing symbolism throughout the Radigund sequences, evoking, as we shall see, contiguous ideas of Fortune, Fate, Time and ultimately Providence.

The pointed use of the idea of will throughout canto v, and the opposition "Or God or Fortune" which appears earlier at the judgement of Amidas and Philtra (V-iv-14) suggest that wilful choice and not fortune, Providence and not fate are the values which finally will be shown to be victorious. We remember, for example, that Artegall's battle with Radigund is prefaced by Spenser's reference to fate, the "work of heavens will" as Artegall, attempting to free Sir Turpine asks: "Or else what other dismall day/ Is falne on you by heavens hard direction?" Sir Turpine's reply: "But who can scape what his own fate hath wrought?/ The work of heavens will surpasseth humaine thought," earns Artegall's reproach: "Faulty men use oftentimes/ To attribute their folly unto fate" (V-iv-26,27,28). Obviously, "heavens hard direction" is the course of Providence while Sir Turpine's "folly" is his subjugation to his idea of fate. Artegall's subjugation also renders him passive; however, we recognize that his ability to wait, to keep vigil until his "owne true love" can rescue him (V-v-57) reveals a winning faith in Providence. This passivity can be traced to Artegall's role as Providence, imaged

in the crocodile who, like Artegall, is rendered "humbleness meeke" by the rod of Isis: (V-vii-16).⁷⁵

In the second chapter of his book on the allegory of Justice, T.K. Dunseath discusses the interesting 'problem' of Artegall's submissiveness (i.e. that of the crocodile) in the Isis Temple sequence. His conclusion is that Artegall, first wrathful and then fawning, must grow humble before uniting with Britomart in an image presenting "the union of opposed principles operating as the instrument of destiny."⁷⁶ Dunseath proceeds from the vision in Isis Church where the crocodile "...swolne with pride of his owne peerless powre" is subdued "...turning all his pride to humbleness meeke" (V-vii-15,16). At that moment Isis symbolizes "that part of Justice which is Equity"; Artegall therefore assumes an attitude of humility, which, I suggest, is a proper stance before these divine attributes of Justice which Isis repres.

The Artegall-crocodile covering before Britomart-Isis, and the image of Artegall as a victim of Radigund's powers, are two instances of feminine superiority. The first is described as unlawful sovereignty and as I suggested earlier, perhaps is best understood as a trial, or an initiation into the feminine forces of the universe metaphorized not as Justice, Providence or "heavens hard direction", but as the "tyrannous direction" (V-v-26) of Radigund. The second instance of feminine superiority, especially because Artegall had already undergone the trial of imprisonment and subjugation, merits further discussion.

⁷⁵Alastair Fowler, "Emanations of Glory" included in A Theatre for Spenserians. pp. 55-58.

⁷⁶T.K. Dunseath, Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book Five of The Faerie Queene (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 152. footnote 11..

As those works related to Renaissance concepts of Justice reveal; Artegall (or Justice Absolute) must be tempered by Equity and Mercy;⁷⁷ the latter qualities being especially regarded as attributes of Divinity. Thus the figure of the crocodile, or Artegall in his role as Providence, is naturally abject before these aspects of Divinity. Britomart's sovereignty is a lawful one and unlike Radigund's tyranny her power as Equity furthers the course of Justice through Providence.

I have suggested before that the nature of the link between Providence and Justice is first touched upon when Artegall is initiated into that domain of Justice presided over by images of Fate and Fortune. In the Radigund sequences, Spenser relies heavily for his meaning on the complex pagan interpretation of the moon image. When he approaches the realm of Providence however, he shows the continuity and progression of man's idea of predestination by following Renaissance mythographers who transfer the qualities traditionally symbolized by the changeable moon to those attributes carried by the image of a "Christian Sun".⁷⁸ In the narrative of The Faerie Queene this transformation is carried by the virago figure of Radigund who imposes the accoutrements of bisexuality upon Artegall, and thus firmly links him to the pagan moon-justice images. From the images surrounding her, from her dress and her function in Book V; we recognize Radigund as an 'infolded' Diana figure. In the Gardens of Adonis this archetype for Radigund, dressed in "silver buskins" (III-vi-28)

⁷⁷ James E. Philips, "Renaissance Concepts of Justice and the Structure of The Faerie Queene Book V," from Essential Articles and Edmund Spenser, ed. A.C. Hamilton (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1972), pp. 422-473.

⁷⁸ Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, p. 349.

and armed with melting sarcasm is described as delighted (like Radigund who hunts a "Salvage Knight") "to chace the salvage beast". She is called Diana, Phoebe and Lucinaes (III-vi-21,24,27), and all the antique names of the moon; when Venus must seek her help, she does so using a water image, the pun on tide and time is grounded in Diana's cosmic functions:

Faire sister, ill beseemes it to ubrayd
 A dolefull heart with so disdainful pride:
 The like that mine may be your paine another tide.

The Diana-Radigund figure links Artegall to the moon-justice symbol; but Spenser uses this same figure to associate ideas of fate and fortune with the idea of Christian providence. As the goddess of the moon, Diana is glorified as a pagan figure of fate, yet eventually she is absorbed into a providential Christian metaphor. From Diana's description in the Aeneid (IV, 511), Renaissance mythographers recognized this goddess as "tria virginis ora Dianae" and saw in her what Edgar Wind has called "vestiges of the Trinity". Diana is also acknowledged as a Trinitarian goddess in Horace (Carmina III, xxii) and in the Ovid moralise.⁷⁹ Thus, for Renaissance iconographers, Diana "foreshadows the triple glory of the Christian sun".⁸⁰

Artegall's education, begun by Astraea, is completed in the Amazonian sequences as the Diana-Radigund figure opens the door to his providential understanding of his own destiny as a Knight of Justice. Just as Diana as a symbol of fate evolves into a symbol of the Trinity, so too, by a similar evolution (one completed by the death of Radigund) does Artegall, symbolically transcend fate and fortune, to share

⁷⁹Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, p. 249.

⁸⁰Ibid. p. 249.

(as Osiris) the Christian symbolism of the sun. In the Isis Temple sequence this transformation is verified when we learn that:

Well therefore did the antique world invent
That Justice was a God of sovaine grace
And altars unto him and temples lent
And heavenly honours in the highest place;
Calling him great Osyris...

The Justest man alive, and truest did appeare (V-vii-2);
and that, "Osyris signifies the Sunne" (V-vii-2).

Artegall emerges as a figure of Providence and as a purveyor of the Christian idea of Justice; once lifted, the mantle of bisexuality which was bestowed in the Amazonian cantos, reveals itself as a multi-levelled metaphor for reciprocity. Like the hermaphrodite Venus, Artgall becomes a repository reconciling the antinomies which traditionally lie at the heart of all divine attributes. Just as Christ is immanent yet divine so also is the Osiris-Artgall figure. As a figure of Providence, Artgall carries the mysteries of both temporal and eternal Justice. He shares these paradoxical qualities with figures such as Venus and Isis, transcending his function as a mere Knight of Justice and fulfilling his quest by becoming a fit consort for Britomart-Isis on two levels. As Providence he is the link between human and divine; his humility before the divine principle, Equity is correct. As Justice however, he rises to meet Britomart-Isis on the same transcendent plane, "For that they both like race in equall justice runne" (V-vii-4).

Spenser's argument for Justice must touch upon fate and providence until the idea of Justice is expanded to include reciprocal flow between the old mythology and revealed religion. Just as the triform moon goddess Diana (and here we must include Isis-Britomart who also partakes of positive moon symbolism-- "Isis coth the moon portend", V-vii-4)

foreshadows the Christian sun, so too does the androgyne contain the idea of godhead in its completion. The bisexual Artegall is initiated into Justice by assuming the androgynous form of this completed virtue.

Clearly the virago (V-vii-4) aspect of Britomart, which we glimpse as she wrathfully dispatches Radigund, also belongs to this iconographic tradition. The rescue of Artegall follows her achievement of a "Crowne of Gold" and as she lays waste the pagan Diana embodied in Radigund she brings the opposing Venus-Diana aspects of her own character into a Christian perspective. Thus the fall of Radigund asserts the rule of Equity and Providence over the tyranny of pagan Fortune and Fate; Artegall's freedom, which results from Radigund's death, assures the fulfilment of Providence as it was earlier defined in Merlin's prophecies.

We understand Artegall's faults from the point of view of his role as the "Salvage Knight"-- "sans finesse", endowed with "excessive virility", on the other hand we remember that Artegall trained in an Age of Gold by Astrea, the female embodiment of Divine Justice, practises upon wild beasts to prepare for the redemption of a socially degenerate world.⁸¹ Clearly he is fashioned for his judicial task saving only that fault which will bring him to the "squalid weed", the "pattern of dispaire"; just as belief in "Chaunce" and "misfortune" brings Sir Turpine to the scaffold and to the ignoble death decreed by "luckless stars" (V-v-10,18). That fault is his blindness to the reciprocal nature of Justice, the interaction between the divine and the human which makes Justice an aspect of Divine Love. Because the 'governance' of Justice is

⁸¹ Jean McMahon Humez, "This Richly Patterned Page" included in Eterne in Mutability, ed. Kenneth John Atchity (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1972), p. 82.

Love, Artegall must be initiated into the unfolding of this virtue through Eros. His fault will be rectified through Venus as Britomart-Isis who transcends the moon, her golden crown pointing beyond it.

The image of Artegall bound "...with such hard bands/ Of strong compulsion and streight violence," (V-v-33) and subject to the unfolding of all Clarin's "Subtill nets" (V-v-33) recalls those images of bondage related to the archetypal figures of Venus and Mars. These images make explicit Spenser's admonition in the Proem to Book V that "...most is Mars amiss of all the rest". Artegall's experience of femininity is also an experience of the binding processes of simple love for he is the object of desire and his 'lover' is a tyrant in the Courtly tradition.⁸² Radigund seeks to "him unbind/ And by his freedom get his free goodwill;/ Yet so, as bound to me he may conti: still" (V-v-32). In the context of Artegall's imprisonment however, the exchange of sexual roles points to the prevailing discordance when violence becomes the tool of personal as well as social relationships. The unnaturalness of Artegall's bondage is foreshadowed on a cosmic level in the astrological imagery of the proem, where the discord in nature is described:

For that same golden fleecy Ram, which bore
Phrixus and Helle from their stepdames feares,
Hath now forgot where he was plast of yore
And shouldered hath the Bull which fayre Europa bore.⁸³

Aries, the sign of Mars, has displaced Taurus, the sign of Venus; the god of War has usurped the place of Love and initiated a chain of discordance.⁸⁴

⁸² Jean McMahon Humez, "This Richly Patterned Page" included in Eterne in Mutability, ed. Kenneth John Atchity (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1972), p. 82.

⁸³ Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene Book Five, ed. Ray Hefner from The Works of Edmund Spenser, a Variorum Edition, eds. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, Frederick Morgan Padelford (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1936), p. 158

⁸⁴ Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 149, 194-195.

The position of Eros (Venus and Isis) must be re-established before the gifts from Love may bring peace and Justice.

We know that Britomart, Artegall's "owne true love" will free him and just as she earlier lifted Scudamore from despair she will restore Artegall to his rightful place. Her Venus-like ministrations again emphasize the Goddess's restorative ability.⁸⁵ Lest we fear the brutality of a universe and a time abandoned by Astraea who:

...here on earth...lived moratallie;
 For till the world from his perfection fell
 Into all filth and foue iniquite,
 Astraea here mongst earthly men did dwell,
 And in the rules of justice them instructed well: (V-i-4)

we may with comfort recall that although the age of Justice is the Iron Age, the most base in the hierarchy of the Ages of Man and the farthest removed from the Age of Gold; it is considered to be the final stage in the history of man and an Age of Judgement. Artegall is, with Britomart, the instrument of Divine Justice. He carries "Chrysaor" the sword which as Astraea's legacy is "Tempred with Adament", that substance "uneath to understan" (IV-x-39), symbolic of the mystic fifth element which brings unity and harmony. The fulfilment of their quest is their union in Book V, Britomart's restorative role having been foreshadowed in the same classical images which in this book describe the Ages of Man.

Britomart's choice in the House of Busirane led her to shun the golden door (III-xi-56) and seek to accomplish the rescue of Amoret by entering the "yron wicket", the "brasen dore" (III-xii-23,24) which held Busirane and his victim. Through her actions, Spenser shows us that Britomart will accommodate the trials of a base era, and that she is destined to rescue Artegall from "that iron prison", itself a microcosm of "the world",

⁸⁵ Jean McMahon Humez, "This Richly Patterned Page" included in Eterne in Mutability, pp. 81,90.

"runne quite out of square" (Proem V-i). The square as a symbol of the earth or as the focus of alchemical attention as the sought after lapis or philosophers' stone, expressed the union of the four elements. Thus by including the symbolism of the four seasons, the four stages of Man's life and the four points of the compass, the square becomes a fit symbol for the world Britomart is destined to regenerate. We remember that having freed Artegall Britomart "caused him those uncomely weeds undight;" she sought "other rayment," and "him anew had clad" before she finally "did true Justice deale,/ That all they, as a Goddess her adoring,/ Her wisdom did admire, and hearkened to her loring" (V-vii-42).

As befits the theme of a fallen age, clothing imagery in the Amazonian episodes, reflects the feminine agent of Man's Fall; yet the bisexuality inherent in the imaging of Artegall's shame and despair also relates back to the Platonic notion of Justice as a bisexual virtue linked to the moon. We must be careful to remember that the lesson of reciprocal flow in Justice, like that of reciprocity in Love, is taught through the bisexual symbol. Because we understand that Britomart [as "Equity" (V-vii-3)] now embodies the 'feminine' aspect of Justice, Artegall may once more appear undisguised and clothed as a knight of Justice. In Isis and Osiris both the masculine and feminine polarities of Justice are represented and are modulated by their reciprocal love. When in Canto vii Britomart exchanged her silver "Moon-like Mitre to a Crowne of gold" she assumed as well the auspices of a Justice conceived in a different tradition from Radigund's. Through the rescue, Christian Providence is set in motion and shown to be more powerful than either Fortune or Fate.

Although the humility of Providence before the immanent goddess of

Justice is perhaps best logically explained in the context of Christian Humanism⁸⁶ in Renaissance jurisprudence, Spenser's treatment of Equity and Justice is more poetically coherent when viewed through the veil of Isis and Osiris, the two central mythic vehicles Spenser chose. Drawing his symbolism from the Neo-Platonism which was his heritage both by temperament and education,⁸⁷ Spenser does not hesitate to dramatize it with the power and mystery of Egyptian myth.

Britomart, whose success will determine the historical destiny of the Tudor line (III-iii-22,24), lifts us out of the cyclic fatalism which Venus represents. Venus' attributes and powers, both earthly and divine belong to the sphere of innocent nature. From the Garden of Adonis we recognize her powers over all creatures and all matter; but the cyclic reincarnation and the foreboding figure of Time present in these gardens, betray the fatalism which pervades pagan myth. In Books III and IV the combination of mythic and romantic modes stresses the cyclic nature of the universe. While the Venus in IV-x, allows Spenser to describe the divine attributes of the goddess and to present her as a symbol of Eros and Divine Love, this image is so firmly grounded in the romantic structure of Books III and IV that to preserve the serious social tone of Book V, the poet seeks out Egyptian sacred history.⁸⁸ He significantly removes us from the currents of Greek myth and specifically informs us about the linear context of Egyptian myth. He selects his central symbols

⁸⁶ A.C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 185

⁸⁷ Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, pp. 112-113

⁸⁸ James E. Philips, "Renaissance Concepts of Justice and the Structure of the Faerie Queene, Book V" from Essential Articles and Edmund Spenser, ed. A.C. Hamilton, pp. 473-479.

from stories "Of th' old Aegyptian Kings that whylome were, / With fayned colours shading a true case" (V-vii-2). These lines turn the reader's attention to the historical experience Spenser is about to narrate. In Canto VII, Britomart steps out of myth and into history, changing her 'name' from Venus to Isis, she now assumes the qualities, earthly and divine, of both Venus and Isis. Because of the euhemeristic interpretation of this myth, Britomart as an Isis figure takes on historical credibility. Moreover Spenser demonstrates an acute sense of historical awareness by choosing the Isis-Osiris myth as the visionary centre of his Book of Justice. Angus Fletcher discusses Spenser's choice:

Euhemeristic interpretation ties this myth to actual historical time, preserving the ratio of the sacred and the profane, the circle and the line."⁸⁹

Isis, as the central visionary symbol of Book V, is the tangent of the perfect circle described by the hemaphroditic Venus, or to use the symbol Spenser provides, the figure of Isis describes the "square" sought in the poem (Proem V-v), collecting and unifying the mythological and historical levels of the poem.

The Amazonian Cantos may be seen as a mirror image of Britomart's initiation in Isis Church for in both the temple and its demonic parody, the "iron prison", the traditional bisexual qualities of Justice are elucidated. Equity is the primary principle of Isis' sovereignty, and it is Equity or inner harmony which Artegall learns at Radigund's hands.⁹⁰ This reading supports my earlier statement that by assuming the accoutrements of bisexuality Artegall also assumes those qualities of reciprocity

⁸⁹ Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment, p. 88.

⁹⁰ T.K. Dunseath, Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book Five of The Faerie Queene, p. 214.

characteristic of the androgyne - the Neo-Platonist's sovereign symbol of Justice.

T.K. Dunseath's reading of the Amazonian sequence is also relevant to this discussion: "Spenser is going to pivot the myth of Hercules-Omphale neatly about and make it reveal Artegall's inner strength instead of emphasizing his weaknesses."⁹¹ The source of this inner strength is Artegall's discovery of self, a resolution of his inner discords; that is, Artegall's experience of the feminine role tempers his entire being. Similarly, the important capture-rescue motif (stressed earlier in this essay to demonstrate the resolution of conflict in Britomart's character), is recognized by Dunseath who states the implications of these symbolic actions in writing of Britomart and Artegall: "...her rescue of him will complete an interior design of deliberately balanced opposites." The balance and unity first idealized in the hermaphroditic Venus is greatly dramatized in the rescue sequence. On the narrative level of the poem, Britomart's rescue of Artegall asserts the importance of the feminine aspect of Justice, while negating those traditional feminine qualities usually associated with the moon, with instability and with fate.⁹² Ultimately, the transcendent aspect of Justice represented in the divine androgyne, Isis, is superior to Artegall as a figure of Providence. Yet the Christian paradox in which Providence (including time and history) co-exists with man's desire for transcendence (and the end of time), is apparent in Spenser's handling of Isis and the crocodile.⁹³

⁹¹ T.K. Dunseath, Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book Five of The Faerie Queene, p. 140.

⁹² Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), p. 51.

⁹³ Robert Ellrodt, Neo-Platonism in the Poetry of Spenser, p. 70.

As Robert Ellrodt describes it, Spenser's concept of Providence is "bound up with the Christian conception of time not as a degraded image of eternity but as a teleological process designed by God to bring all created beings to their mature perfection, natural or spiritual with the fulfilment of this design, time itself will be brought to an end; and 'none no more change shall see'" (VII, 59).⁹⁴ Providence must serve Divinity, especially that aspect of God we recognize as Divine Justice.

III. From 'Mythos' to 'Logos': The "just heritage" (v-vii.23).

In the proem to Book V Spenser couches his vision of the fallen world of history in astrological terminology: the planets,

...doe at randon rove
 Out of their proper places farre away,
 And all this world with them amisse doe move,
 And all his creatures from their course astray,
 Till they arrive at their last ruinous decay.

Also moving "at random" in a fallen world are the questing knights whose errancy reflects the world "amisse". Just as the planets stray from their course, so do men from virtue. Spenser's cosmic metaphor points the parallel between microcosm and macrocosm and emphasizes that divine influence is felt through intermediary causes. Through this metaphor of the stars, Spenser reveals that the pattern of providence unfolding in the world includes the Fall of man.

Angus Fletcher, noticing this providential relationship between Spenser's dark portrait of knight errantry and his redemptive vision of the "streight course of heavenly destiny" (III-iii-24) writes:

⁹⁴Robert Ellrodt, Neo-Platonism in the Poetry of Spenser, p. 69.

Each episode of knight errantry adds material substance to the accumulated argument of a higher truth, the revelation of a providential will. Because Spenser is a Christian poet, writing in the tradition laid down by the Old and New Testament, this higher revelation usually ends up as a vision of justice.⁹⁵

To reconcile the steps of a fallen world to the pattern of Providence, Spenser follows tradition and depends upon a Christian philosophy of history moving towards Justice. Erich Auerbach, in Mimesis, describes the method of this metaphor's unification by showing how the connection between two events linked neither temporally nor causally, may be established.⁹⁶ He suggests that the classical, cyclic conception of history is abandoned and the temporal and causal connection of occurrence is dissolved when a vertical link to Divine Providence (the source of Justice-- Spenser's "righteous doome"), is made. Earthly relations of place, time and cause cease to matter "as soon as a vertical connection, ascending from all that happens, converging in God" becomes significant.⁹⁷

Justice (an aspect of providence) is fittingly revived in Book V by a return to the earliest gods of civilization, those celebrated by Egyptian sacred history. The poet returns to a time before the world was "out of square" (Proem V-i), "With fained colours shading a true case" (V-vii-2), he returns to a prelapsarian era and uses the myth of Isis and Osiris to marry his vision of Love to a vision of Justice unfolding in time and "led with eternal providence" (II-ii-24).

Spenser follows the scholarship of his time when he seeks out Egypt as the source for a divinely communicated structure of justice.

⁹⁵ Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment, p. 44.

⁹⁶ Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 73.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 74.

In Spenser's time the transliteration of Egypt's symbols into Christian metaphors was a popular scholarly pursuit.⁹⁸ Just as mythographers had Christianized Greek mythology, they now made elaborate speculations on the metaphysics of Egyptian religion. Spenser's antiquarian interests are fully treated in The Source of The British Chronicle History in Spenser's Faerie Queene, where examples from the poet's View of the Present State of Ireland demonstrate his interest in the new 'science' of Egyptology. Spenser's friendship with Sir Walter Raleigh intimates a shared interest in popularizing Egyptian myth and culture; the speculative nature of Egyptian studies is demonstrated as Spenser muses upon such matters as the etymological link between the Egyptian name for the god-ruler, the 'pharaoh' and "Farrih" the war cry of the ancient Irish nation.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, modern scholarship confirms Spenser's choice of a hermaphrodite Isis as an appropriate symbol for Justice. In this particular androgynous figure, Spenser has located the two main aspects of God, Love and Justice. Kathleen Williams in Spenser's World of Glass notes that Isis in Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride (an acknowledged source for the Isis Church episode) like the Venus hermaphrodite, is double sexed and (more significant to Spenser's argument for Justice) that "all divinities exist in Isis."¹⁰⁰ Alastair Fowler in Spenser and the Numbers of Time specifies the Venus of Spenser's poem as the hermaphroditic Cyprian Venus and points to the

⁹⁸ D.C. Allen, Mysteriously Meant (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), n. 114.

⁹⁹ Carrie Anna Harper, The Source of The British Chronicle History in Spenser's Faerie Queene (New York: Haslet House, 1964), pp. 18, 22.

¹⁰⁰ Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass, pp. 127-174

continuity of this important conciliatory figure by relating it to Isis and the goddess Natura of the Mutability Cantos;¹⁰¹ while Robert Ellrodt allows that the "hermaphroditic Venus is to be associated with actual religious cults and the Isis myth...",¹⁰² both of which are closely bound to Egyptian concepts of final judgement and eternal justice. In Book V, we may understand Isis as Spenser's ideal of Divine Love active in the world; the image of Justice therefore, like that of generative love, has its ultimate fulfilment in Providential time. The hermaphroditism is thus not only a symbol of Love and Justice, but of time and eternity. For these reasons, Isis surpasses all the other Eros figures in The Faerie Queene, in both immediacy and importance. In Isis, Spenser collects the erotic history of ancient myth but also adds to this history both an immediate political and a Christian dimension.

Isis, as part of the prophetic historicism of The Faerie Queene now emerges as both symbol and figura. As symbol, this figure is a direct interpretation of Nature,¹⁰³ continuing the symbolic mode established by the role of Venus in the mythic structure of Books III and IV. However, we must take into account the historicity which is the primary context of Book V, to understand the difference between Spenser's symbolic or mythic forms and his use of figural prophecy.

Isis shares with the Venus symbol the ability to express and contain the idea of the sacred, but contributes to Spenser's vision

¹⁰¹ Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, p. 163.

¹⁰² Robert Ellrodt, Neo-Platonism in the Poetry of Spenser, p. 91. See also, Thomas P. Roche, The Kindly Flame, pp. 17-202.

¹⁰³ Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, p. 212.

of history by being grounded in linear not cyclic time. This aspect of the Isis figure allows figural prophecy (that is, the interpretation of a person or event in pre-Christian history as phenomenal prophecies of events in the New Testament) to enter the allegory of Book V.¹⁰⁴

The replacement of figura by symbol at this point in the poem refutes a current critical opinion that holds archetype and history to be irreconcilable in the Book of Justice.¹⁰⁵ From the point of view of figural interpretation, Books III and IV, may be seen as a fabricated typology providing an interesting reversal of the usual passage of a hero from history into the shadows of myth. Britomart (Venus-Isis), completes her quest by stepping out of Greek mythology into Egyptian sacred history, the figural form required by the "present days" (Proem V-iii). By introducing figural interpretation to the structure of meaning in Book V, Spenser comments on the reality out of which his entire Faerieland has been created, and incorporates a view of history as meaningful, orderly and progressive.¹⁰⁶

In Books III and IV, the image of the "antique" world (Proem V-iii) provides the poet with the mythological sources for his metaphors of reciprocal love. Through the myths of the Love quest in these books, Britomart is initiated into the mysteries of her psyche and is guided

¹⁰⁴ Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, p. 73.

¹⁰⁵ Joanne Craig, "The Image of Mortality: Myth and History in The Faerie Queene," ELH, 39 (1972), p. 539.

¹⁰⁶ Robert E. Reiter, "On Biblical Typology and the Interpretation of Literature," College English, 30 (1968-69), pp. 563-571.

towards spiritual enrichment and self-realization.¹⁰⁷ I believe that her entrance into history, specifically in Book V's Temple of Isis becomes the movement from 'mythos to logos', from fate to providence. We observe the movement, from one state of consciousness to another in which self-awareness is newly defined as relative to history.¹⁰⁸ Angus Fletcher supports this description of movement towards consciousness when he speaks of a "revelation of a providential will"¹⁰⁹ and both my view of an emerging social consciousness and Fletcher's view of Spenser's religious argument for Providence and Justice, serve to elucidate the changed historical perspective initiated in the Book of Justice. Let us now look at the figures of Egyptian Love and Justice from this point of view. The general concern of this thesis is to demonstrate reciprocal flow in the central symbols of Love. Reciprocity in Book V occurs between Isis and Osiris as a deified couple, continuing the kind of unity stressed in the Britomart metaphor in Book III or in the Venus 'hermaphroditos' of Book IV. While the idea of the 'coincidentia oppositorum' and its mediant, reciprocal flow, remain present in the figure of Isis, Britomart's dream in Isis Church also establishes the viability of the separate figures of Isis and Osiris as agents of Eros in history. In the Proem to Book V the link between the sovereign and divine attributes of justice is made; Justice is the royal attribute of God:

¹⁰⁷ Richard A. Underwood, "Myth, Dreams and The Vocation of Contemporary Philosophy," included in Myth, Dreams and Religion, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co. Inc., 1970), pp. 243-244.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. pp. 241-242.

¹⁰⁹ Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment, p. 44.

Resembling God in his imperiall might;
Whose soveraine powre is herein most expresst.

Again, this time describing the flow of Justice into the temporal sovereign (and indicating the ideological buttress of the Elizabethan court of final appeal, the Court of Equity), Spenser writes of Justice as:

That powre he also doth to Princes lend
And makes them like himself in glorious sight, (Proem V, 10)

Because Spenser next addresses Astraea the "Dread Soverayne Goddess, that doest highest sit/ In seat of judgement in the Almightyes stead" (st. 11), we may conclude that Isis-Britomart, representing Equity, symbolizes Astraea's sovereign attributes and judicial powers.

When in Canto vii Spenser relates the attributes of Osiris, Justice is described somewhat differently as

...this same virtue that doth right define:
For the heavens themselves. (V, vii, 2)

Here Spenser seems to suggest another aspect of Justice, one removed from its temporal manifestations. We have then, in the sovereign and divine aspects of Justice both a temporal and an eternal view of Judgement. Isis-Britomart, representing Equity symbolizes the sovereign attributes of Justice. Divine Justice is located in the Osiris-Artegal figure.

The reader cannot help but remark upon the supremacy of Spenser's female figures, and to agree with the suggestion¹¹⁰ that in the case of Isis particularly this supremacy serves a political as well as a symbolic end. We realize that Spenser allows Isis a 'superior' position in the Church episode, to emphasize the reciprocal (i.e. equitable) relationship between Sovereign and Divine Justice. The reciprocal view of Justice as the providential interaction of the worldly and the divine

¹¹⁰ Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, p. 57.

is further demonstrated in Canto vii: first in the unified image of Justice as "a God of sovereign grace" (st. 2) and then in the image Isis crowned in gold "To show that she had powre in things divine" (st. 6). Just as the hermaphroditic Venus presents the paradigm of reciprocity in Nature, so Isis and Osiris, united in Love, present a paradigm of reciprocity between Equity and Justice, the worldly and the divine.

The reasons for Spenser's choice of Isis and Osiris may well be the historical aspect of this myth, but the symbolic meaning of the androgynous Isis is not thereby excluded; while symbolizing Equity the sovereign quality of Justice, Isis implicitly maintains the divine attributes of the hermaphrodite. The dream presentation Spenser has chosen as a vehicle for the marriage suggests this interpretation and the unity of the symbolic structure in the three Books of Love seem to require it.¹¹¹

If, for Spenser, Love is a metaphorical means of expressing the 'coincidentia oppositorum'¹¹² then we should consider the nature of the opposites which strive for unity in Book V. Clearly Equity and Justice are far from being polar opposites like the irreconcilable figures of Love and Hate in the Book of Friendship. Instead, these two separate virtues, Equity and Justice, unite and interact creating an ongoing reciprocal flow of Justice manifested in time. The temporal and historical necessarily do to the work of Providence and in this reciprocal agreement the order of Justice include and transcends that of time.

¹¹¹Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, pp. 212-213.

¹¹²Susanne Murphy, "Love and War in The Faerie Queene" from Eterne in Mutability, p. 129.

This last point is made at a most obvious symbolic level for at first glance we may perceive that Britomart's dream unfolds "all her fortune and posteritie". (V-vii-12); as Isis (Equity) she accepts the service of the crocodile and brings forth "a Lion of great might" (V-vii-16): the issue of the physical union of Isis and Osiris in Horus from whom the symbol of time, the hora or Hours are derived.¹¹³

I would now like to turn my attention to the symbolism contained in the Horus-Hours image for I believe that Time, always elusive in The Faerie Queene, here receives the careful attention of the poet who through this image defines permanence and change in an equitable relationship.

For Spenser the symbolic meaning of Horus and the Hours are closely associated; this link, strengthened by a pun, contributes to our understanding of the birth of Horus as the birth of time in V-vii-6.¹¹⁴ First, through the birth of Horus (and by association, the Hours), Spenser emphasizes the initiation into "posteritie" supporting Britomart's vision. On this level the symbolism clearly receives support from the literal narrative. To confirm that the Hours have symbolic links to this particular union and its offspring however, we must look into Spenser's use of this image elsewhere in his poetry.

The Hours, who in Ovid are attendants of the sun,¹¹⁵ are described in the Mutability Cantos as porters-

¹¹³ A. Kent Heatt, Short Time's Endless Monument (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 80, 111.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 111.

¹¹⁵ Ovid, The Metamorphoses, trans. Mary M. Innes (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968), Book II, pp. 50, 53.

Of heavens gate (whence all the gods issued)
Which they daily watch, and nightly wake
By even turns...

as guardians of heaven's gate we will see that the Hours preside over both time and the mysteries of initiation into the cosmic order. It is from the image of the "gate" of heaven that the idea of initiation proceeds. The etymological background of this word suggests an entry or beginning.¹¹⁶ Moreover, Spenser's use of the Hours as attendants of the "virgin" bride in Epithalamion (st. 6-11, 82-84) supports this idea by suggesting that these three goddesses participate in the symbolism of creative generation. However, their classical genealogy¹¹⁷ differs slightly from Spenser's designation of their birth from the union of Jove and "timely night" (Mut. Cantos 45). Through this change Spenser emphasizes the union of the moon and sun in the marriage of Isis and Osiris. He suppresses the classical triad of (Dikē) Justice, (Eirene) Peace and (Eumonia) Order to point more clearly to the birth of the Hours in Horus and to join the concept of the birth of time to that of a creative "posteritie". Whether we understand the progeny of the Isis-Osiris union either in the context of the Hours or of Horus the same end is served. In the context of the Hours symbolism, the movement of time is the primary meaning for the Hours, like the sun move with the fixed stars, possessing in truth, "heavens gate". The pun on 'gait' may now suggest that the rhythms of the cosmic order are added to those of the order of Nature; those same rhythms of time implicit in the idea of Britomart's "posteritie". The lack of equity in the duration of time in the world, that is, the obvious difference

¹¹⁶ Eric Partridge, Origins (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1959), p. 310.

¹¹⁷ J.E. Zimmerman, Dictionary of Classical Mythology (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 85.

in solar and sidereal hours is reconciled in the overview realized by the cosmic order. Like the errant wandering of the planets which is compensated for by introducing a Providential view of Justice, the inequities of the temporal scheme are resolved in a figure who will symbolize the redemption of time. In Horus, we may find the figure of the Redeemer if we remember that Horus, in his traditional role of Harpocrates, the God of Silence,¹¹⁸ symbolizes the ineffable mystery of Divinity. Harpocrates, sitting contemplatively on the rose petals, his finger placed on his lips, represents the obverse side of the paradox of God as 'the Word'. Like the concepts of movement and rest, present in the final stanza of the Mutability Cantos through the traditional reading of Spenser's image of the "Sabbath" god, Horus encompasses the idea of both time and eternity by presenting us with the potential for redeeming time through eternity. The movement of time may now be understood as a movement out of "ruinous decay" (Proem V) towards silence, rest and perfection.

The priest who interprets Britomart's dream confirms by his terrified response to the vision of Deity this aspect of meaning contained in the birth of Hours:

All which when he unto the end had heard,
 Like to a weake faint-hearted man he fared
 Through great astonishment of that strange sight;
 And, with long locks up-standing stifely stared
 Like one adawed with some dreadful spright:
 So, filld with heavenly fury, thus he her behight. (V-vii-21)

These lines present the ineffable divine mystery conveyed by the vision. From the priest's response we realize that the idea of Horus conveyed by

¹¹⁸ Herbert Spencer Robinson and Knox Wilson, The Encyclopaedia of Myths and Legends of All Nations, ed. Barbara Leonia Picard (London: Edmund Ward Ltd., 1962), p. 5.

the vision in Isis Church is like that of Natura in the Mutability Cantos (VII-13,14). The imagery surrounding the birth of a "Lion of great might", born from Isis and Osiris, the moon and the sun, foreshadows the solar and leonine attributes which also describe the goddess Natura.

C.S. Lewis, who draws the parallel between Isis and Natura; speaks of the creative Word, the Logos symbolized in Natura who unites "solar splendour and leonine terror"; 119

For that her face did like a Lion shew,
That eye of wight could not indure to view:
But others tell that it so beautious was,
And round about such beames of splendor threw,
That it the Sunne a thousand times did pass,
Ne could be seen but like an image in a glass.

(Mut. Cantos vi, vii)

Horus then, like Isis, partakes of the same qualities as Natura, a figure of the Logos, reconciling order and mutability. In the figure of Horus, which acts as a repository for the solar and lunar symbolism of the Hours and the solar and leonine attributes of the Logos, Spenser demonstrates a concept of time which allows reciprocal flow between fixity and change:

for "...being rightly wayd," all things

Are not chanced from their first estate:
But by their change their being do dilate,
And turning to themselves at length again,
Do worke their own perfection. (Mut. Cantos vii-58)

This reciprocal movement which describes the effects of time, stops only:

When no more Change shall be,
But steadfast rest of all things, firmly stayed
Upon the pillours of Eternity. (Mut. Cantos viii-2)

119 C.S. Lewis, Spenser's Image of Life, p. 15.

The interpretation of the Horus image suggested above is supported by A. Kent Hiatt's reading of the Hours' image. The line "by even turns", is the focus of this critic's attention; he suggests that the function of the Hours is a celestial reflection of the basic principles of Equity.¹²⁰ Thus, as Kent Hiatt shows in his numerological analysis of The Epithalamion even in his astronomy Spenser's idea of reciprocity is apparent. Similarly the equitable relationship of Britomart and Artegall is mirrored by Horus, who in turn projects the principle of Equity at work in the cosmos. True Justice is only dimly perceived in time, for "Short time" (Mut. Cantos viii-1) must indeed be overcome by the long range view of eternity. The question of redundancy arises unless the Horus image is seen as a more specific image for time than either Isis or Natura. I pointed out earlier that in the historical context of Book V, Isis may be understood as a figura, foreshadowing Elizabeth's fulfilment of the sovereign reign of Justice. Because the image of Horus is also closely related to concepts of time, it too takes on figural aspects and should be read in the context of providential time. The birth of Horus, like that of Christ is at the equinox.¹²¹ This symbolic birth therefore, inaugurates the last stage in the history of man, that of Judgement. True Eternal Justice returns and this return at the equinox evokes once more the image of Astraea "the Virgin, sixt in her degree, / And next her self her righteous ballance hanging bee" (V-i-11). Thus in the figure of Astraea Spenser complements the image of Horus as the male type of Christ.

¹²⁰A. Kent Hiatt, Short Time's Endless Monument, pp. 33-37.

¹²¹Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, p. 232.

At the beginning of this discussion, I pointed out that it would be prudent to discover the nature of the antinomies Spenser must reconcile in Book V. Significantly, in this book the mythic centre does not only symbolize the coincidence of opposites (which has as its axis the Isis-Osiris union), but also redefines the reciprocal process of this union. Each attribute, whether metaphorized as the sun and moon, or as Equity and Justice, manages to retain a separate identity. Although the union brings forth first on the level of Nature, the Hours; and second, on the level of Grace, the figure of Horus; we notice that each of these symbols describes a principle of reciprocity within its respective order and thus defines the equitable nature of the union itself. In the birth of the Horus-Hours figure, time is given form;¹²² as Isis and Osiris join in erotic encounter their love provides Horus as the figure of Grace which informs the stark "present age". In the Horus-Hours symbol, Spenser secures the presence of providential time in the new reign of Justice.

As many modern critics have demonstrated¹²³ the concept of Osiris as an immanent deity (and here we should note the use of the present tense as Spenser describes "the justest man alive") also contributes to the immediacy of Book V. "Time as pure present"¹²⁴ orders the brisk narrative of this book and the contemporaneity of the historical allegory.¹²⁵

¹²² Evelyn May Albright, Spenser's Cosmic Philosophy and His Religion (New York: Haskell House 1927), p. 33.

¹²³ Rosemary Freeman, The Faerie Queene (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 279.

¹²⁴ Paul Oskar Kristeller, The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino, trans. Virginia Conant (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p. 295.

¹²⁵ Rosemary Freeman, The Faerie Queene, pp. 260-261.

How different this presentation is from that in Book III. In the Gardens of Adonis for example time is cyclic: there the union of form and matter, symbolized by the love of Venus and Adonis, is at once complicato and explicato, a gathering in and an unfolding in the presence of the antique cycle of time.¹²⁶ For Britomart and Artegall however, there is also the linear progression of time and only through their involvement in this historical reality, the realm of divine-human activity, do they fulfil the prophécy of a love-

Which shall revive the sleeping memoree
Of those same antique Peres, the hevens brood,
Which Greek and Asian rivers stayed with their blood
(III-iii-22)

Their love, tied to antiquity, acknowledges the blood sacrifices which history records; but it is significantly free from that cyclic repetition of forms which marks ancient myth. The Book of Justice then, may be seen as an explicato: the virtue of Justice unfolding in linear time. This process, focuses our attention on the difference between the complicato, the unfolding patterns of virtues in Books III and IV, and the outwardly directed virtue of Justice.¹²⁷ The process of explicato is peculiar to the Book of Justice and betrays to the reader the association Spenser made between Justice and Time.

Spenser, by naming this a "stonie" age tells us that his metaphors for Justice will be linked to the moon, to time and to the positive virtues of change.

¹²⁶ Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, pp. 42-43.

¹²⁷ Alastair Fowler, "Emanations of Glory: Neo-Platonic Order in Spenser's Faerie Queene" from A Theatre for Spenserians, p. 64.

It is likely that Spenser found the justification for linking the moon and the idea of "a stonie age" in Ficino's writings upon astrological music where celestial influences are associated with a variety of elements, emotions and moral attitudes. Ficino suggests that as a result of this correspondence between stones, metals and the moon, a "certain celestial virtue will arise."¹²⁸ This epithet a "stonie" age has a long history in hermeneutics and now Spenser appropriates its esoteric associations metaphorically linking the mutable qualities of the moon to the last state (that of Judgement) in the History of Man. The explicato of Justice demonstrates the changed perspective of history in the Book. While Books III and IV are governed by the complicato-explicato pattern characteristic of Renaissance Platonism, the Legend of Justice must depend on a more Protean concept of man. Artegall, like all men, formulates his own history. Thus history is no longer contiguous to fate in Book V but instead is the total of freely willed human action, guided only by the sure knowledge that "all that moveth doth in Change delight" (Mut. Cantos viii-2). In the Mutability Cantos the "procession of times and seasons, which the Titaness expects to provide evidence of universal flux, ironically has an opposite effect... it persuades both the court and the reader of the measured governaunce and direction of time's course."¹²⁹ As we see above, Fowler's comments describe the process and verdict of Mutability's trial as it occurs in the abstract realm of the heavens; but in Book V, the freedom of man's self changing nature is concretely tied to the temporal rhythms of the

¹²⁸ D.P. Walker, Spiritual and Demonic Magic From Ficino to Campanella (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1958), p. 15.

¹²⁹ Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time, p. 232.

processes of Justice. Enmeshed in the mutability of natural existence, Man may by his own action be lifted above "Short time" (Mut. Cantos vii-1); plunging into the midst of time he must work his own perfection.

In Britomart (and her consort) we watch the evolution of this idea. First, as a figure patterned upon Nature Britomart presents to us the cycle of her growth. Then, graced by the initiation which recognizes her maturity, she wears Isis' crown of gold, demonstrating "powre in things divine" (V-vii-6). Like the moon and the sun, she represents the equity of the solar and lunar courses. She thus acquires the power to participate in a history consecrated by the presence of Divinity; in actively fulfilling her vision of Love she achieves her "just heritage" (V-vii-23). In the Mutability Cantos this perspective dominates Nature's final judgement. Like Britomart, Mutability, addressing the "sovereigne goddess" (VII - 16) Natura, also seeks her legacy:

...the gods owne principality,
Which Jove usurps unjustly, that to be,
My heritage Jove's self cannot denie.

Both Britomart and the Titaness desire justice but in Mutability's flight we have a reverse image of Britomart's quest. Britomart achieves her "just heritage" by enduring the process of dilation Natura describes in Canto VII-59; but Mutability breaks not only the laws of Nature "But eke of Justice and of Policy" (Mut. Cantos VI-vi) when she rises to the circle of the moon to first present her challenge of "th' heritage of this our sky" (Mut. Cantos VI-xxx).

The arbitration of Mutability's place however, falls to Natura who soon renders her "righteous doom" (Mut. VIII); like the Britomart-Isis (Elizabeth) figure, the "Dread Soverayne Goddess" who also "Doest to thy people righteous doome aread," Natura fills the "...seate of judgement in the Almightyes stead" (Proem V-ii). Natura's attributes

like those of Britomart-Isis, are first given in terms of Justice and then underscored by a physical description:

Whether she man or woman inly were
That could not any creature well descry.

These lines recall the symbolic meanings attached to the hermaphroditic figures analyzed in the course of reading Books III, IV and V. Finally, the image of Absolute Justice is a divine hermaphrodite and once more we are provided with a cosmic parallel for the union of Britomart and Artegall. The figure of Natura returns us to the original patterns of imagery which link the symbol of Eros, to Spenser's concept of Justice and to the seminal thoughts of this thesis.

In the three books of the Love Quest, Eros in diverse forms, motivates both the logic and the images of the narrative actions. Half human and half divine, this 'daimon' incorporates the paradox of divine mysteries. The idea of reciprocity inherent in this dual image of Eros functions as a structural guide to the creation of such 'hermaphroditic' figures as Britomart, Venus, Isis, Artegall and Natura. We have seen that each form of Eros illuminates the action of the narrative sequences and that mythic figures lend their power to the motivations of Britomart and Artegall until finally we recognize the presence of Eros in each of these figures. We then comprehend the idea of reciprocal love in a range of values made wider than those suggested by the traditional values of Chastity, Friendship and Justice. The scope Spenser finds for his metaphorical use of Eros increases, our own grasp of the dynamics of Justice, Peace and Order. These last attributes are of course summed up in the symbolic hermaphrodites but in the Horus-Horae image, Eros the symbol for the concept of reciprocal love also becomes the pattern for the relationship of time and eternity. Thus the journey which begins with a

vision of Love appropriately ends with the poet expressing his own desire to participate in the quest governed by Eros. Spenser's prayer for "Saboth's sight" (Mut. Cantos viii) confirms the power of Eros as a symbol of man's vision of a Love which encompasses the world and which moves him to seek the final Good beyond it.

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